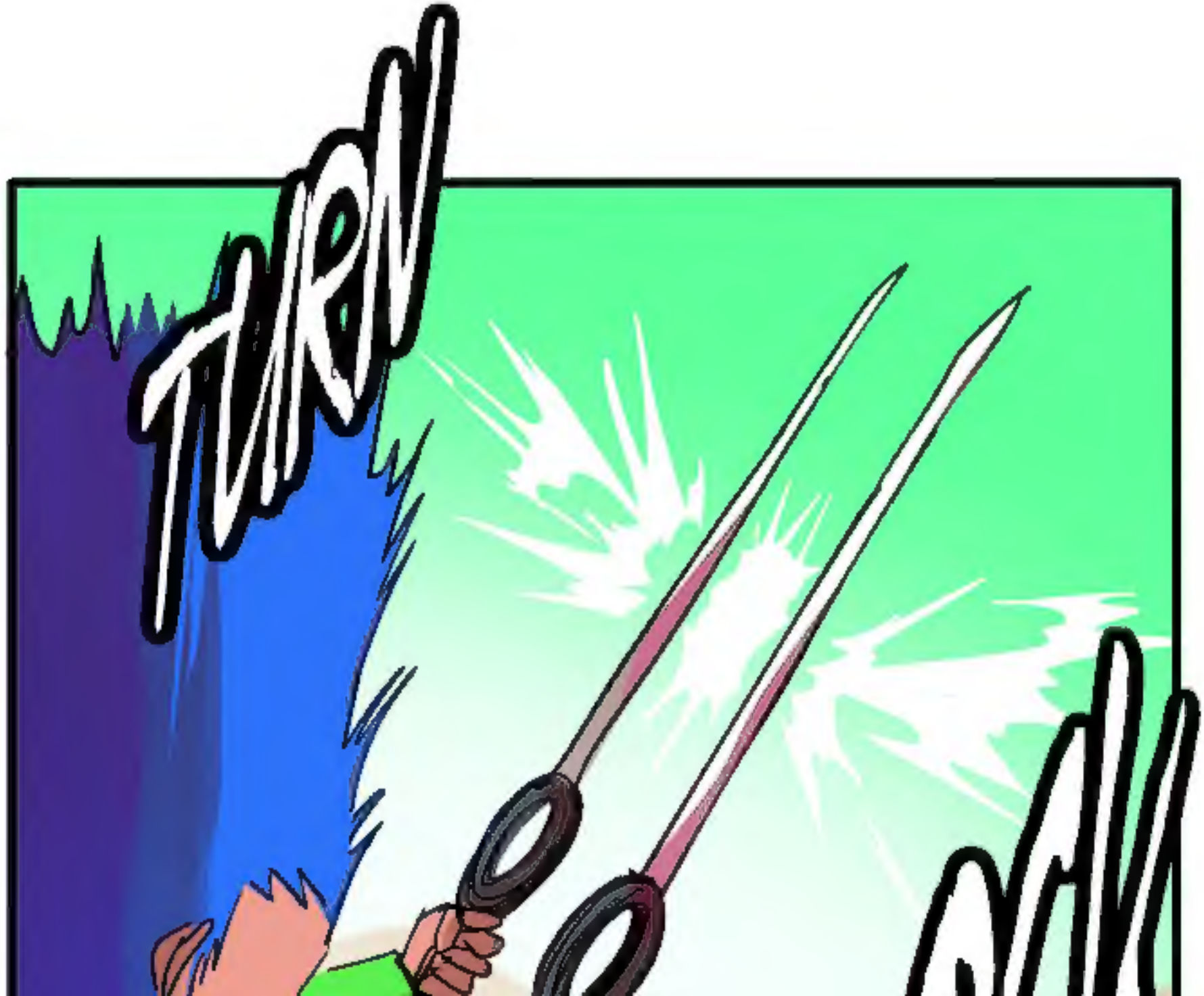
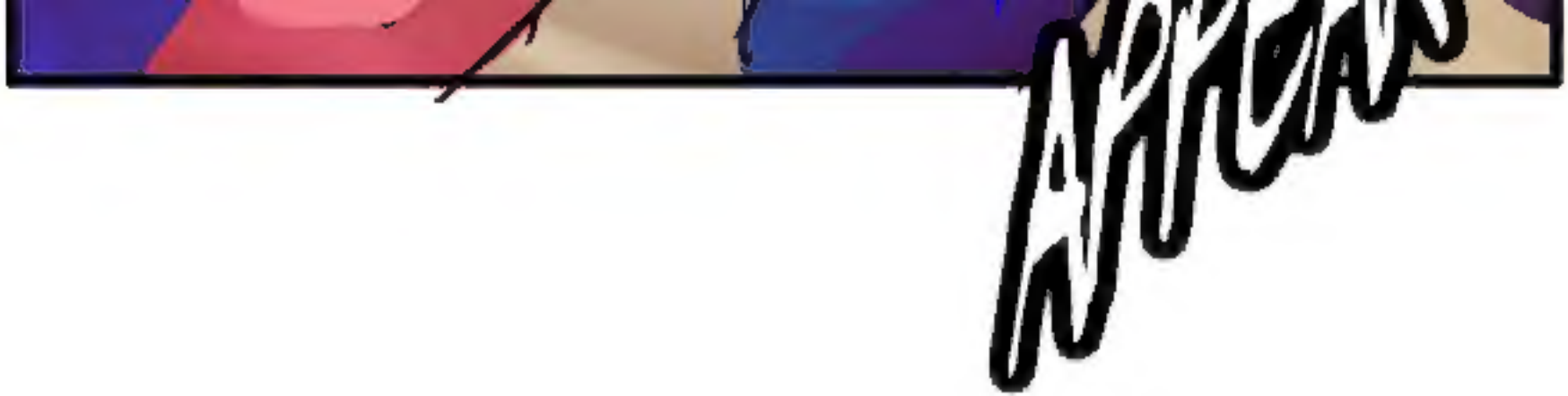
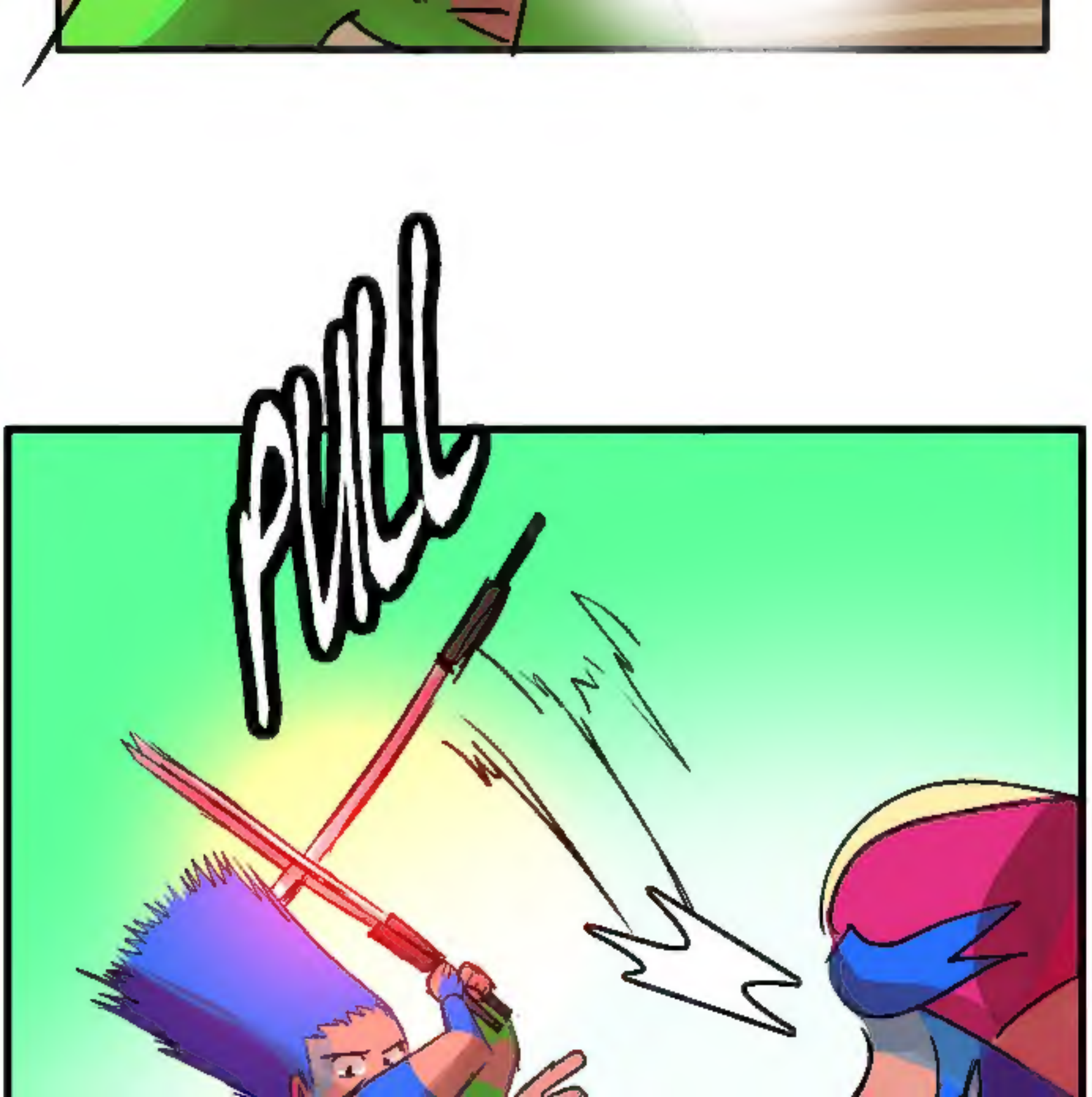

TURN

KGHH!!!
GRRRR



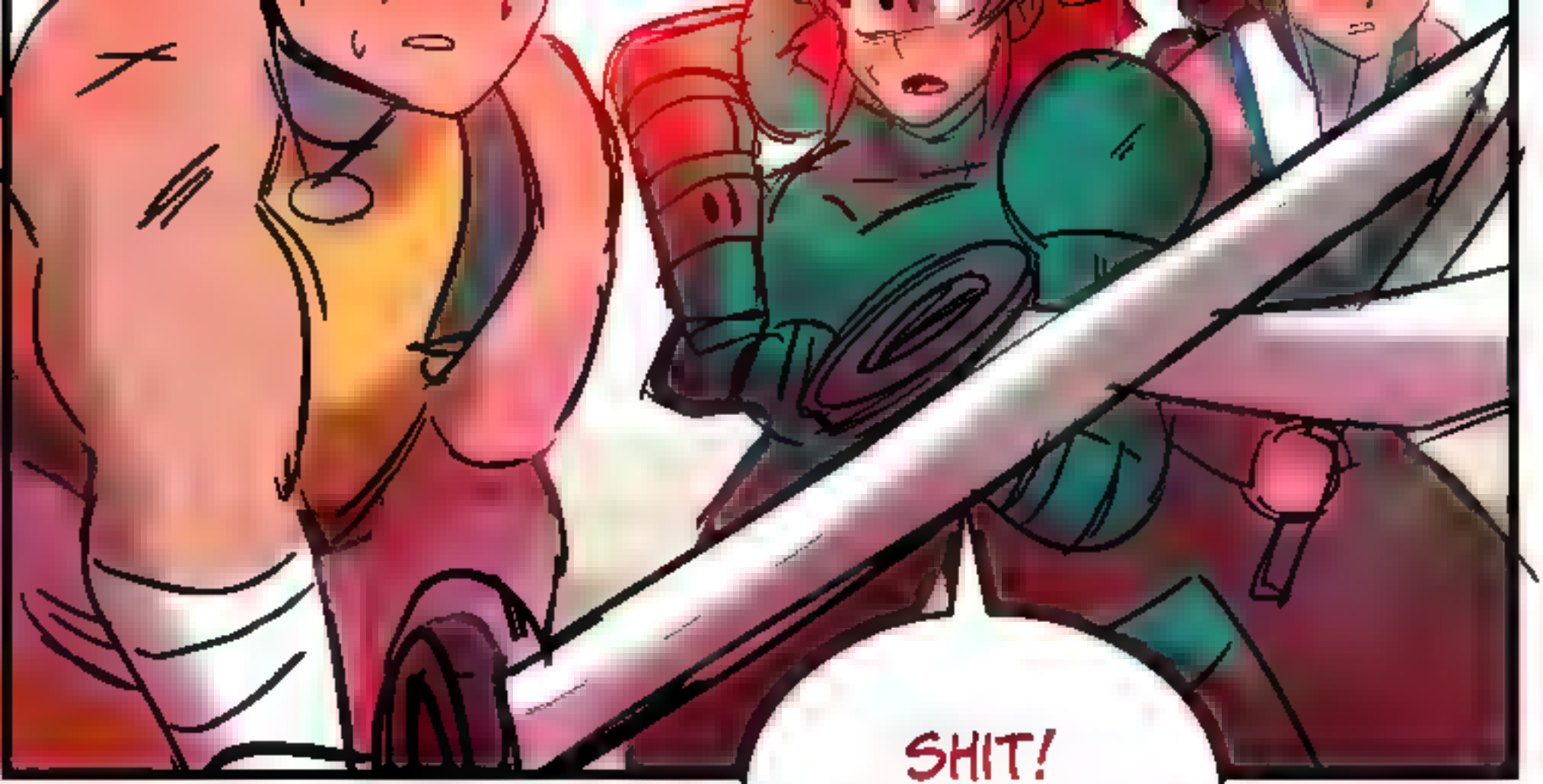
HE KNEW I WAS HERE?
SNAP

WHAT
THE...


pull

TWO DOWN, THREE TO GO.

IT'LL ALL BE OVER SOON.

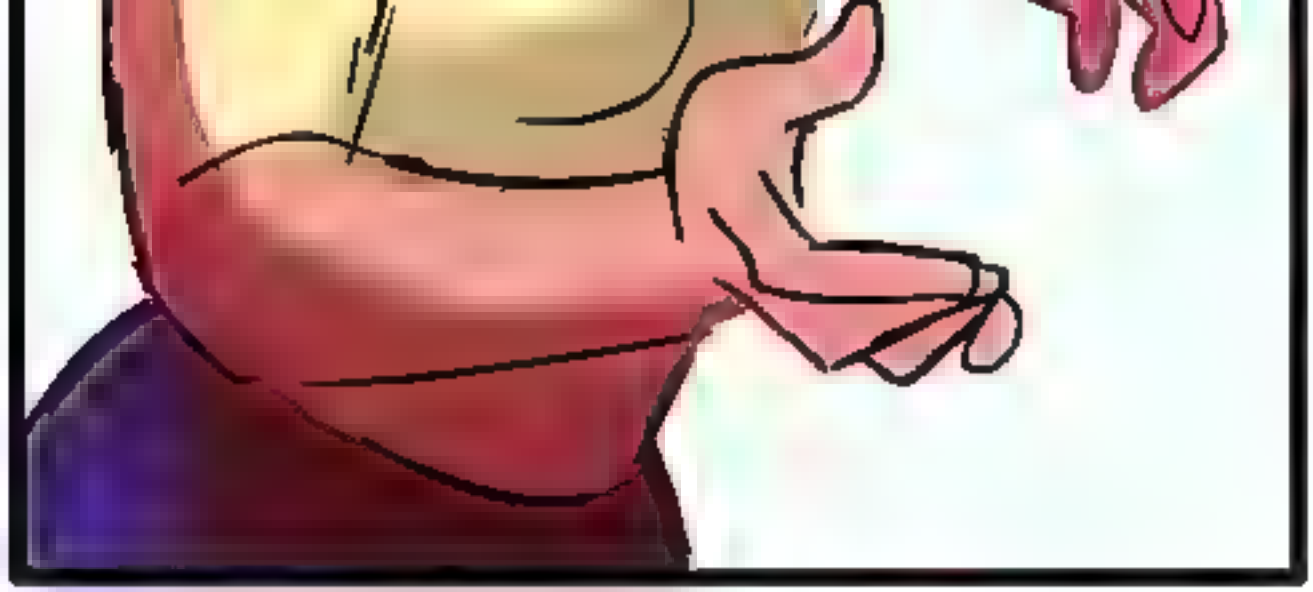

SHIT!
NOW WHAT?

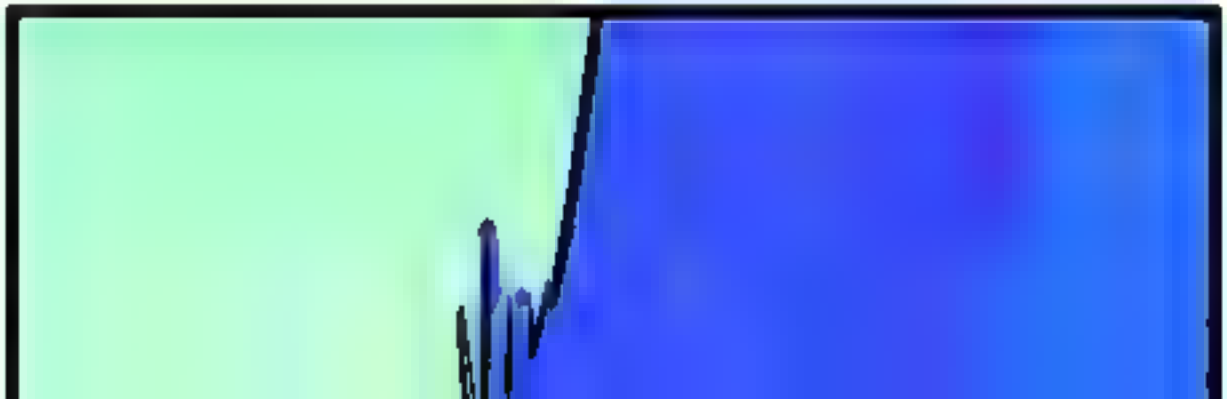
ROOM of SWORDS

CHAPTER 210
"PAID IN FULL"

STORY/ART: TOONIMATED

SINCE WHEN COULD YUMEJI FIGHT?



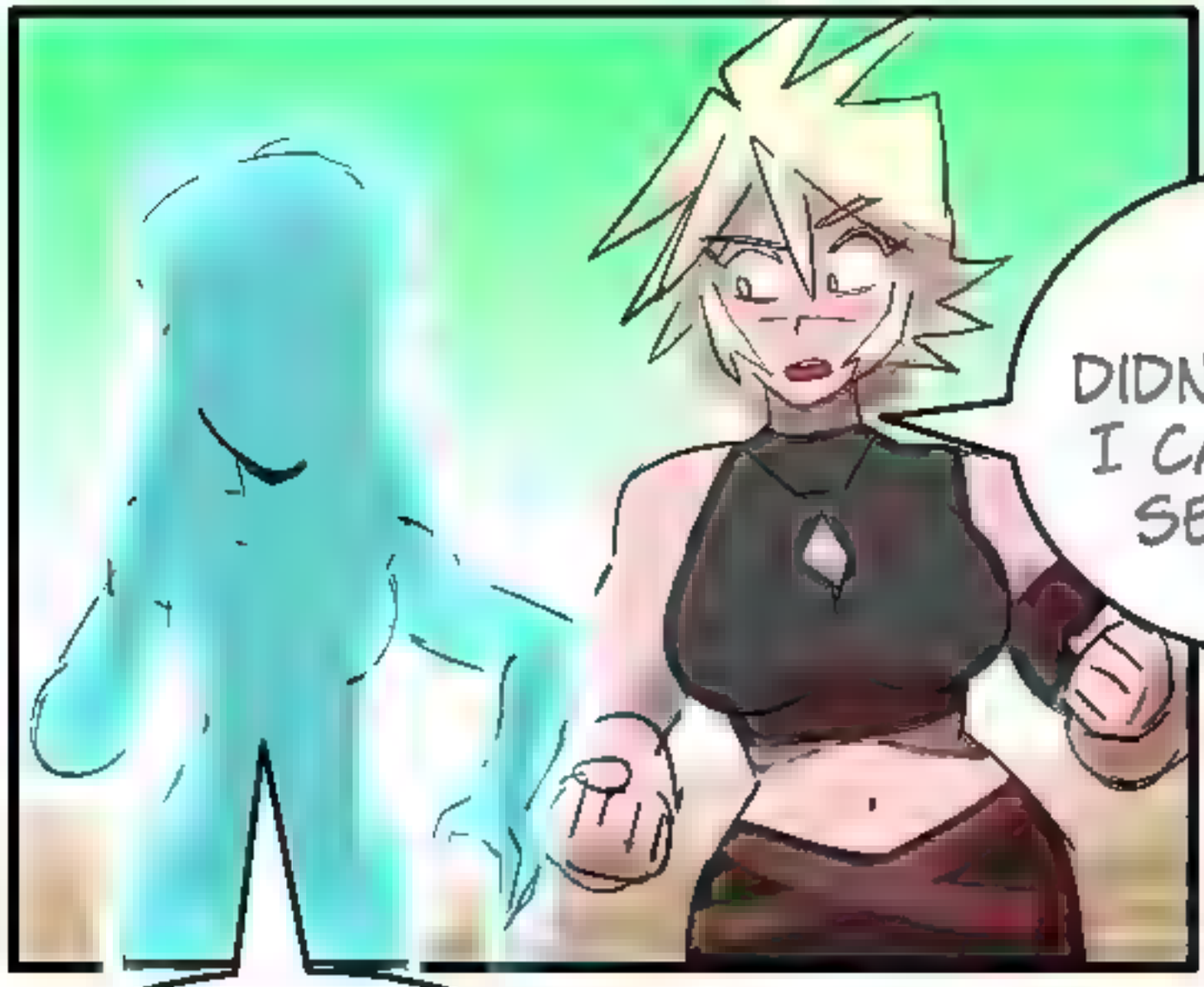


YOUR SNEAKING GOT ME INTO THIS MESS CIB, AND I WON'T LET IT HAPPEN AGAIN. BUT DON'T WORRY, I'M JUST HIGHLIGHTING YOUR PRESENCE.

SCRATCH
SCRATCH
HIGHLIGHTING MY..PRESENCE?

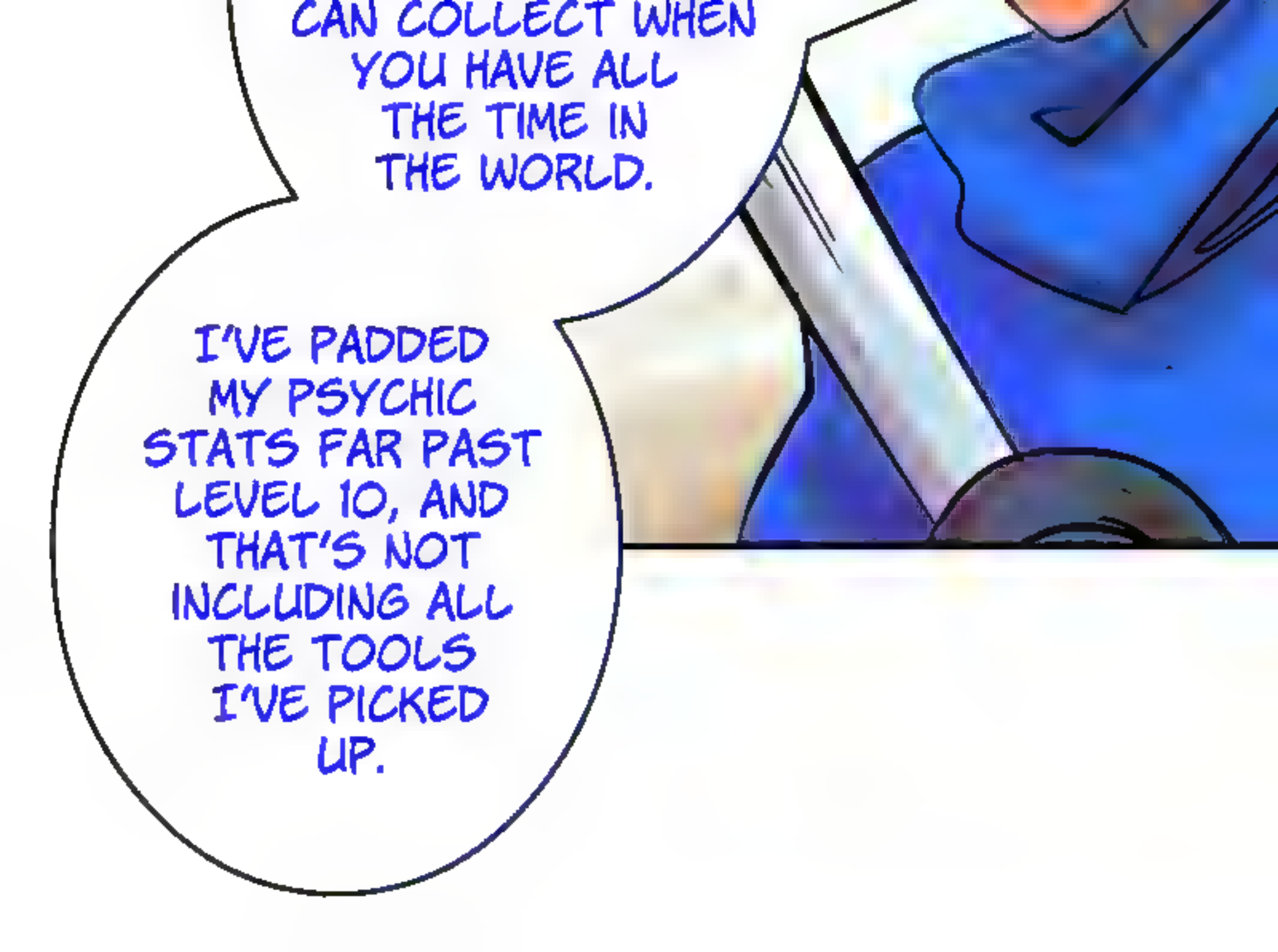
BABE YOU'RE GLOWING!

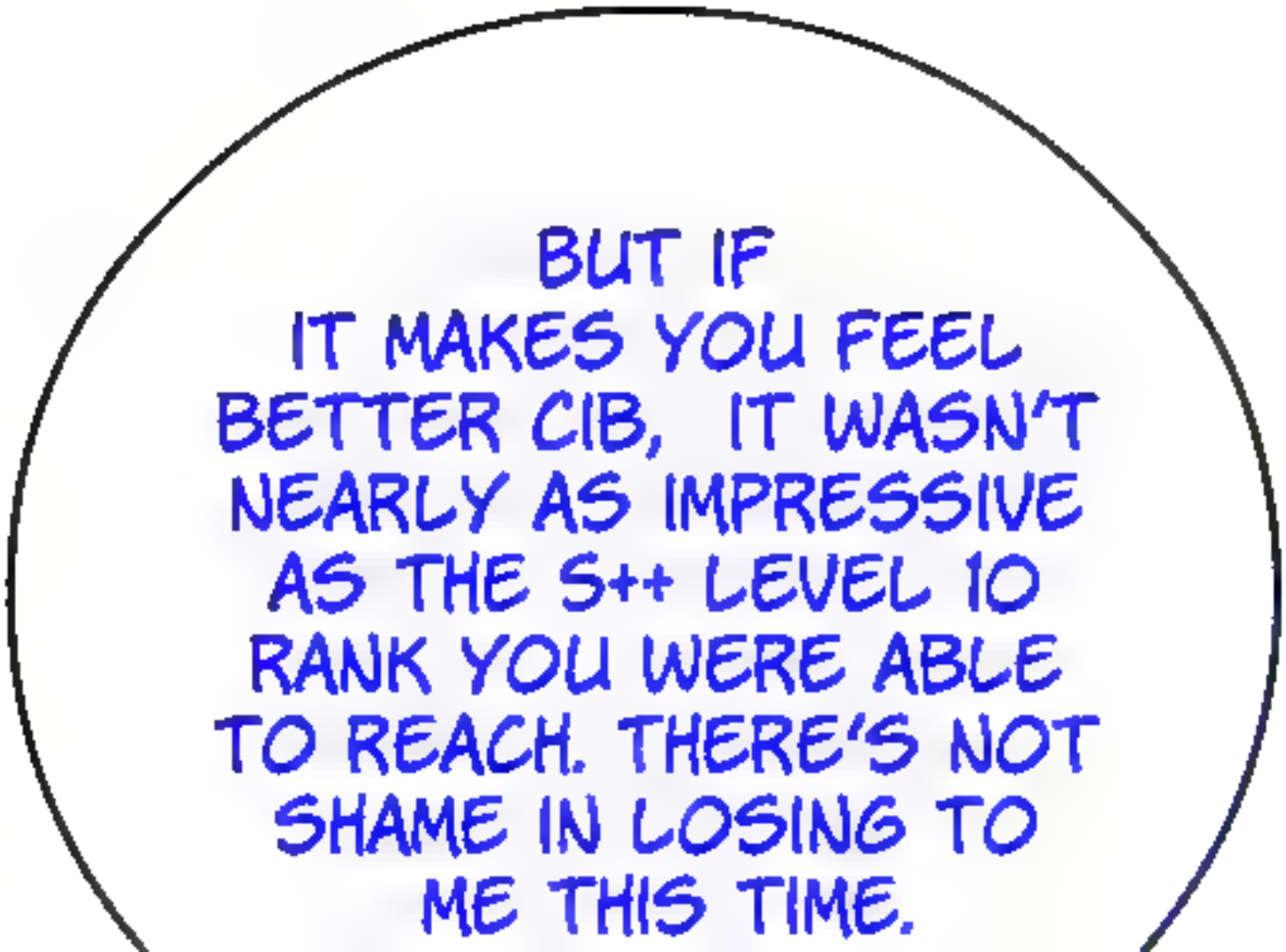
SCREW THIS! I'M DISAPPEARING! THAT SHOULD GET RID OF IT!

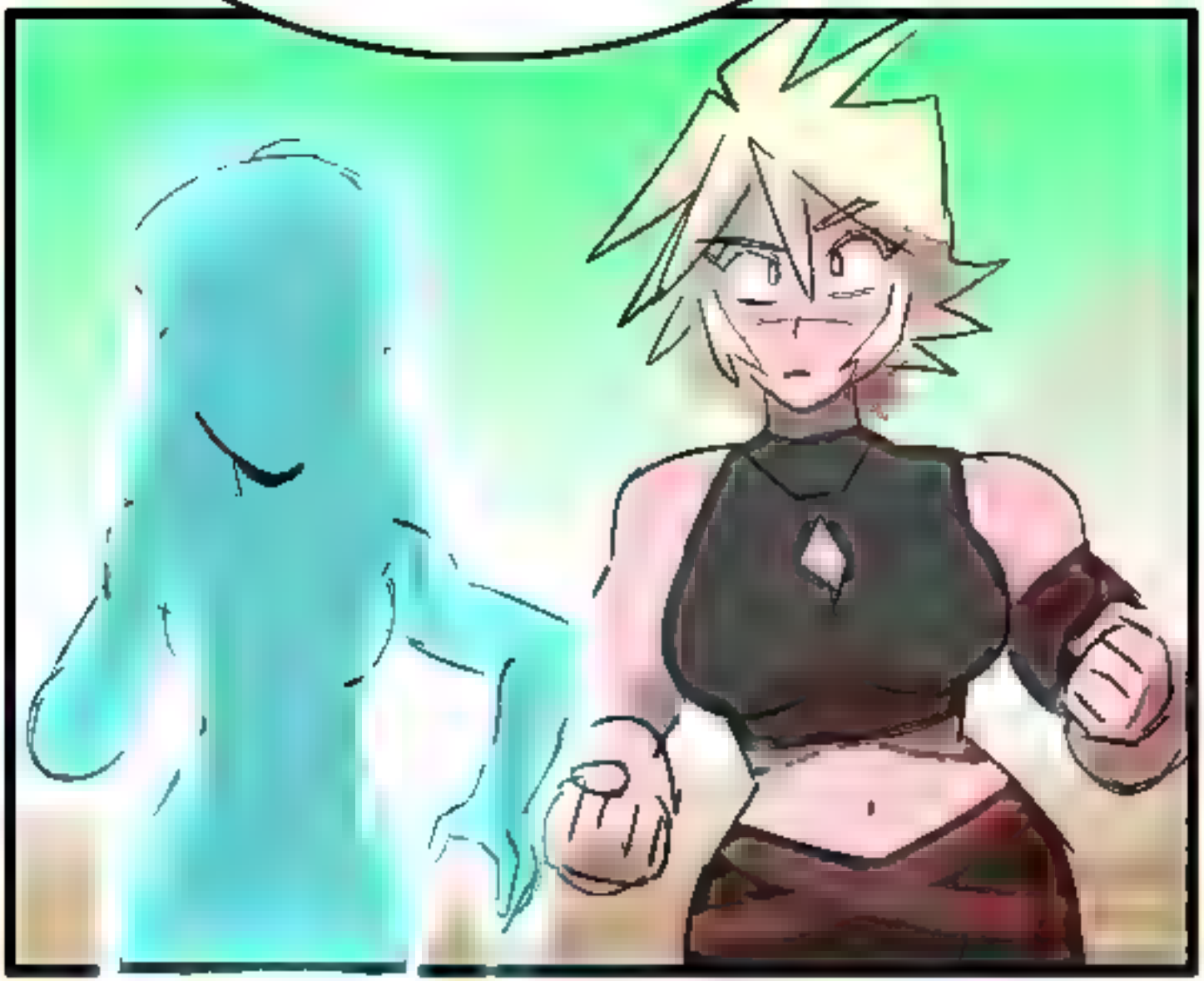


WHAT? HOW IS THAT EVEN POSSIBLE? IT'S YUMEJI! THERE'S NO WAY HE'D BE ABLE TO DO THIS! IT DOESN'T

MATCH HIS POWERS AT ALL!


CAN COLLECT WHEN YOU HAVE ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD.
I'VE PADDED MY PSYCHIC STATS FAR PAST LEVEL 10, AND THAT'S NOT INCLUDING ALL THE TOOLS I'VE PICKED UP.


BUT IF
IT MAKES YOU FEEL
BETTER CIB, IT WASN'T
NEARLY AS IMPRESSIVE
AS THE S++ LEVEL 10
RANK YOU WERE ABLE
TO REACH. THERE'S NOT
SHAME IN LOSING TO
ME THIS TIME.



IT'S NOT ABOUT WINNING OR LOSING. WE'VE GOT A BIGGER PROBLEM. STOP RUNNING AWAY AND HELP US DEFEAT HIM!

IS HE SERIOUSLY DOWNPLAYING LEVEL 10?

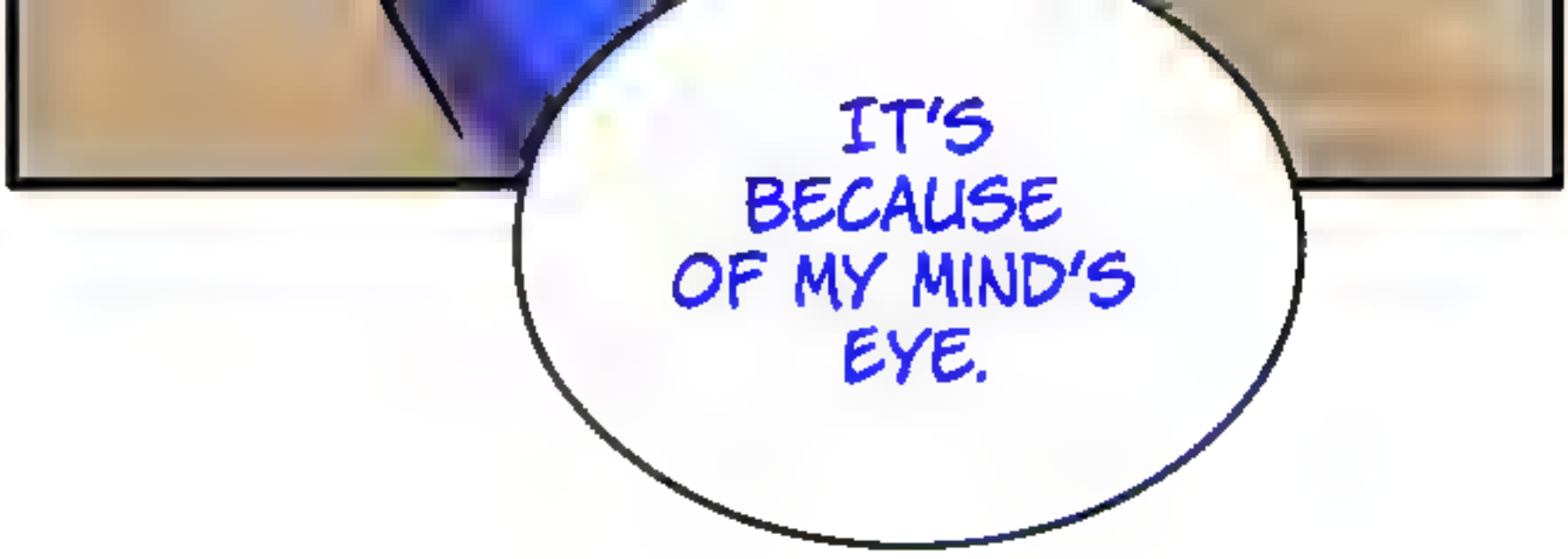
ONLY GYRUS WAS LEVEL 10 BEFORE THE INCIDENT AND HE WAS IN A WHOLE OTHER LEAGUE! OR AM I THE ONLY ONE WHO REMEMBERS THAT?

YOU SAID IT YOURSELF, WE'RE CAPABLE OF BEING EVEN MORE POWERFUL THAN YOU. WHY NOT TRAIN US? WE COULD PUT THIS ALL BEHIND US AND WORK TOGETHER!

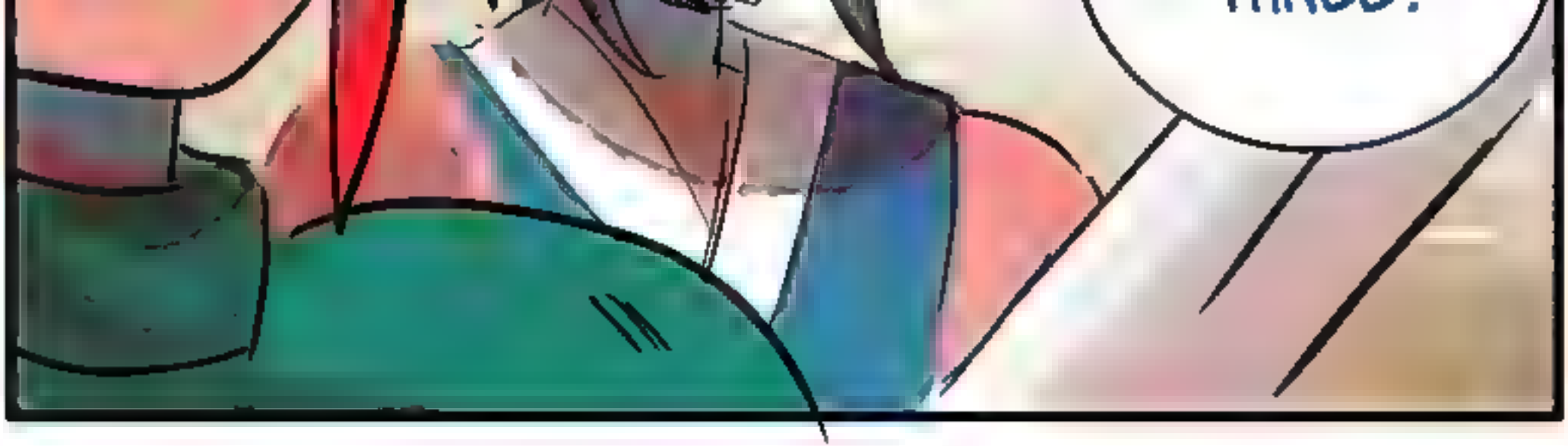
YOU SEEM TO BE FORGETTING THE POINT WHERE ITS NOTHING AGAINST DON! WE SHOULD HAVE JUST EMBRACED THE ROS LIKE I TOLD YOU TOO. BUT FINE, IF YOU'RE SO

EAGER TO LEARN, I
CAN SHOW YOU
ONE TRICK.

YOU'RE
PROBABLY WONDERING
HOW I KILLED YOU ALL,
IF YOU WERE
STRONGER
THAN ME.


IT'S
BECAUSE
OF MY MIND'S
EYE.

MIND'S EYE?
WHY IS HE MIMICKING THREE?



WHAT'S... HAPPENING? IT'S ALL FUZZY ALL OF A SUDDEN...

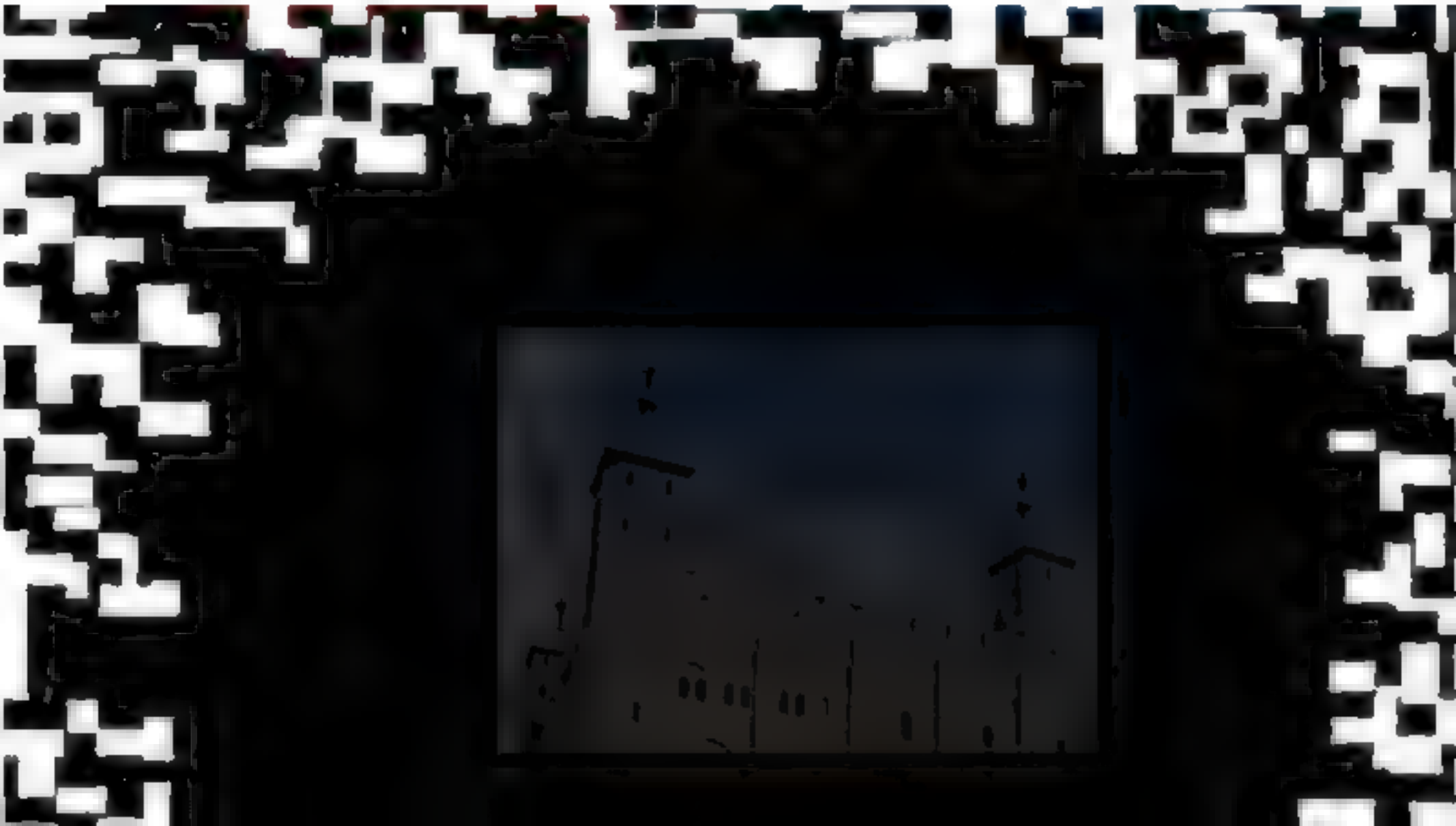
IT'S...
SOME SORT OF
TUNNEL
VISION..

MY EYES HAVE
BEEN REPLACED WITH

MY MINDS' EYE...THE IMAGE IS SO UNSTABLE...

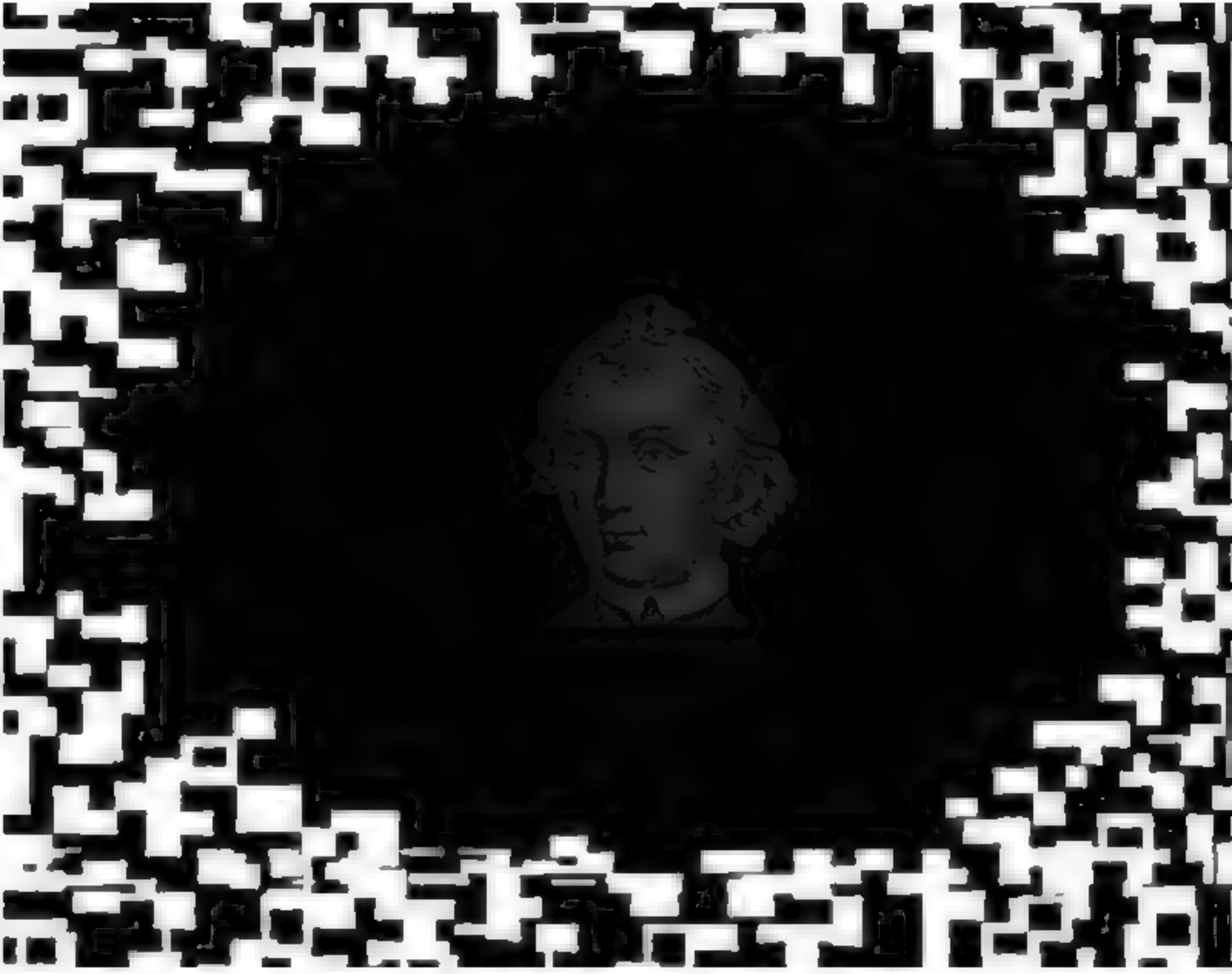
THEY KEEP MOVING.

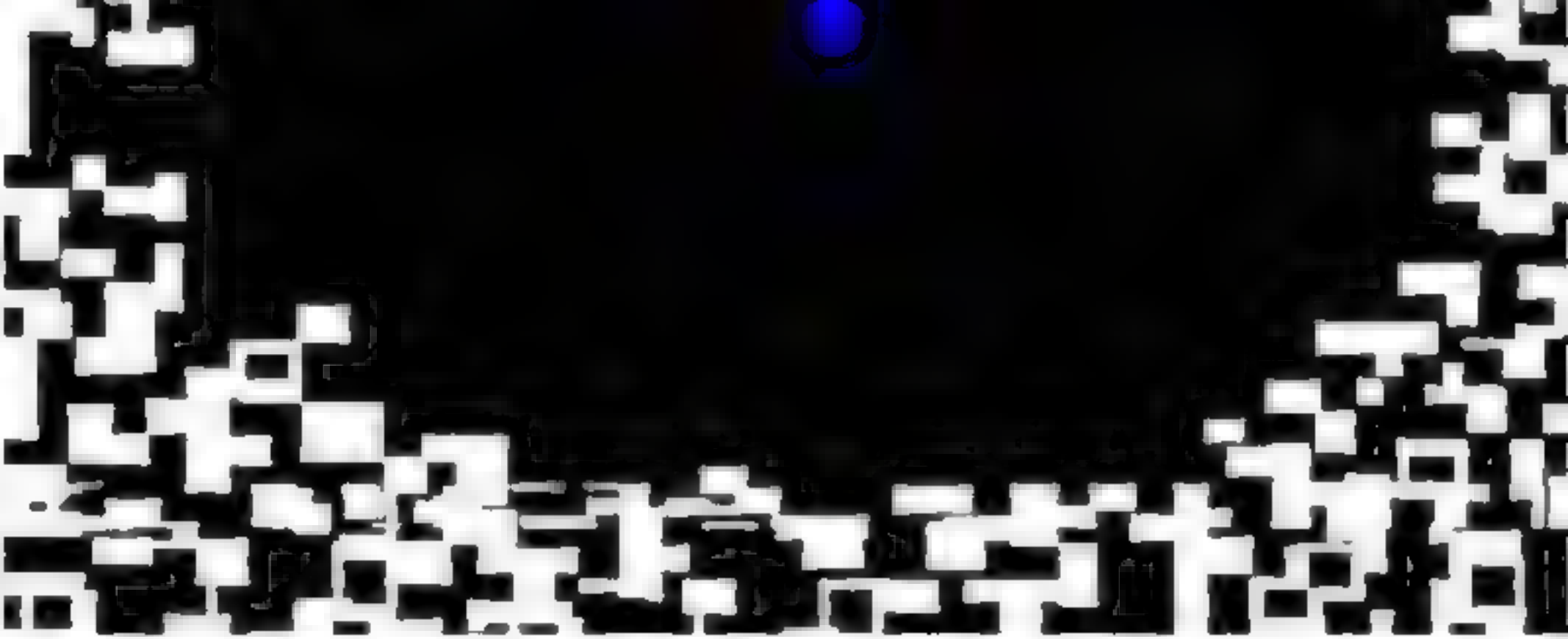
CHANGING.



THEY'RE HAPHAZARD PROJECTIONS...

BUT SOMEHOW
THEY MAKE
SENSE.

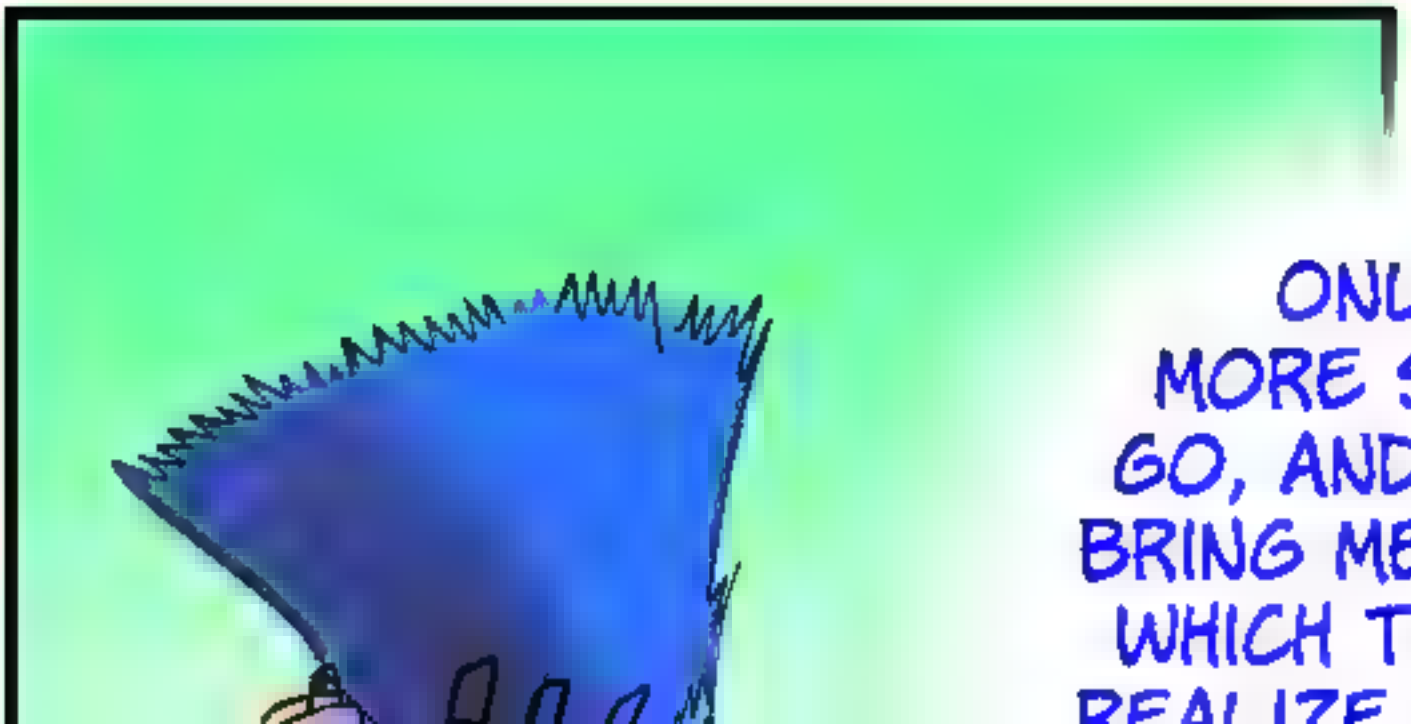




WHERE IS THE SWORD? IT WAS IN MY HANDS!

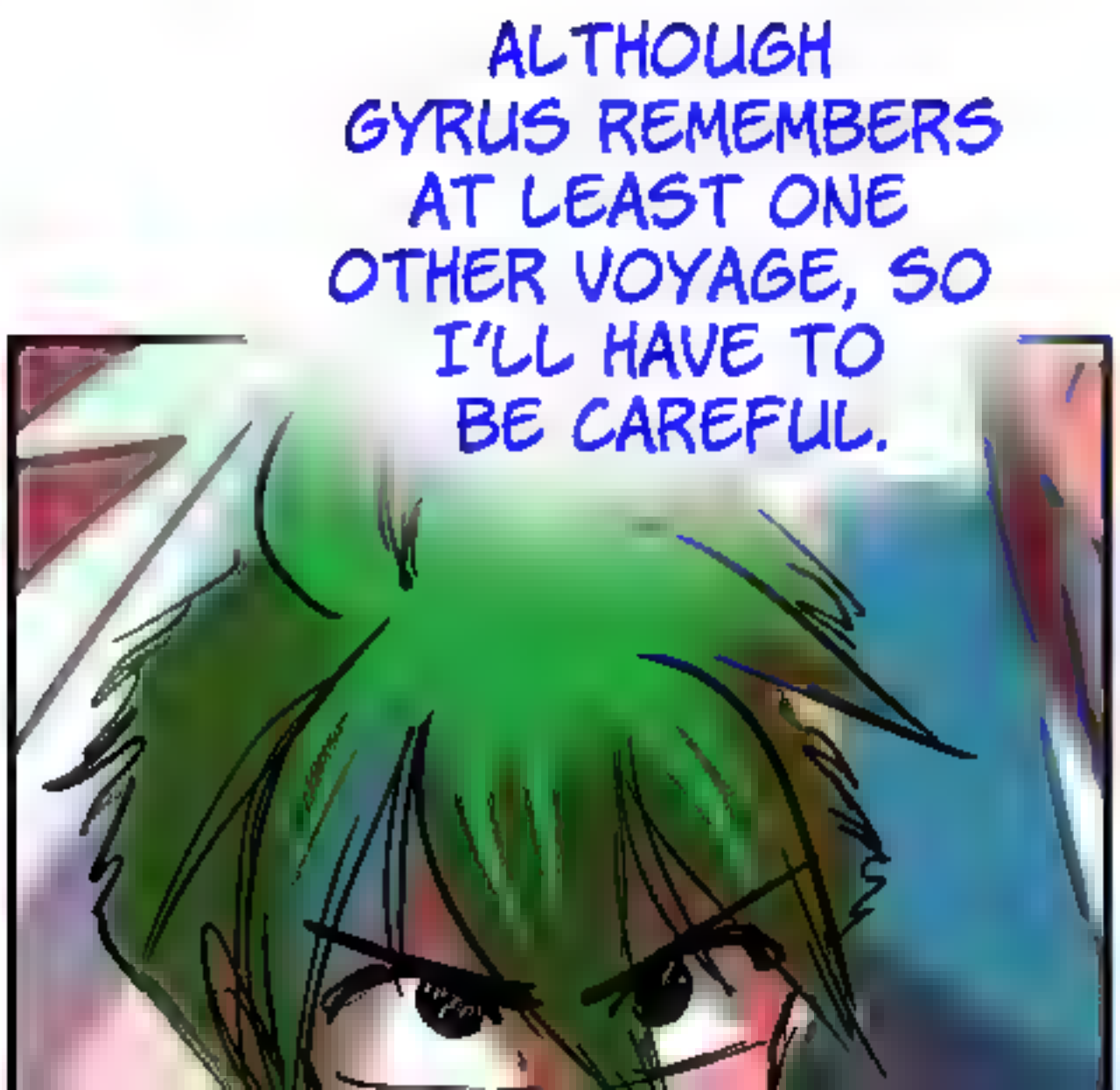
I COULDN'T SEE ANYTHING, IT WAS LIKE I WAS STUCK INSIDE MY MIND!

NOT MUCH YOU CAN DO WHEN YOU'RE OWN MIND IS AGAINST YOU!



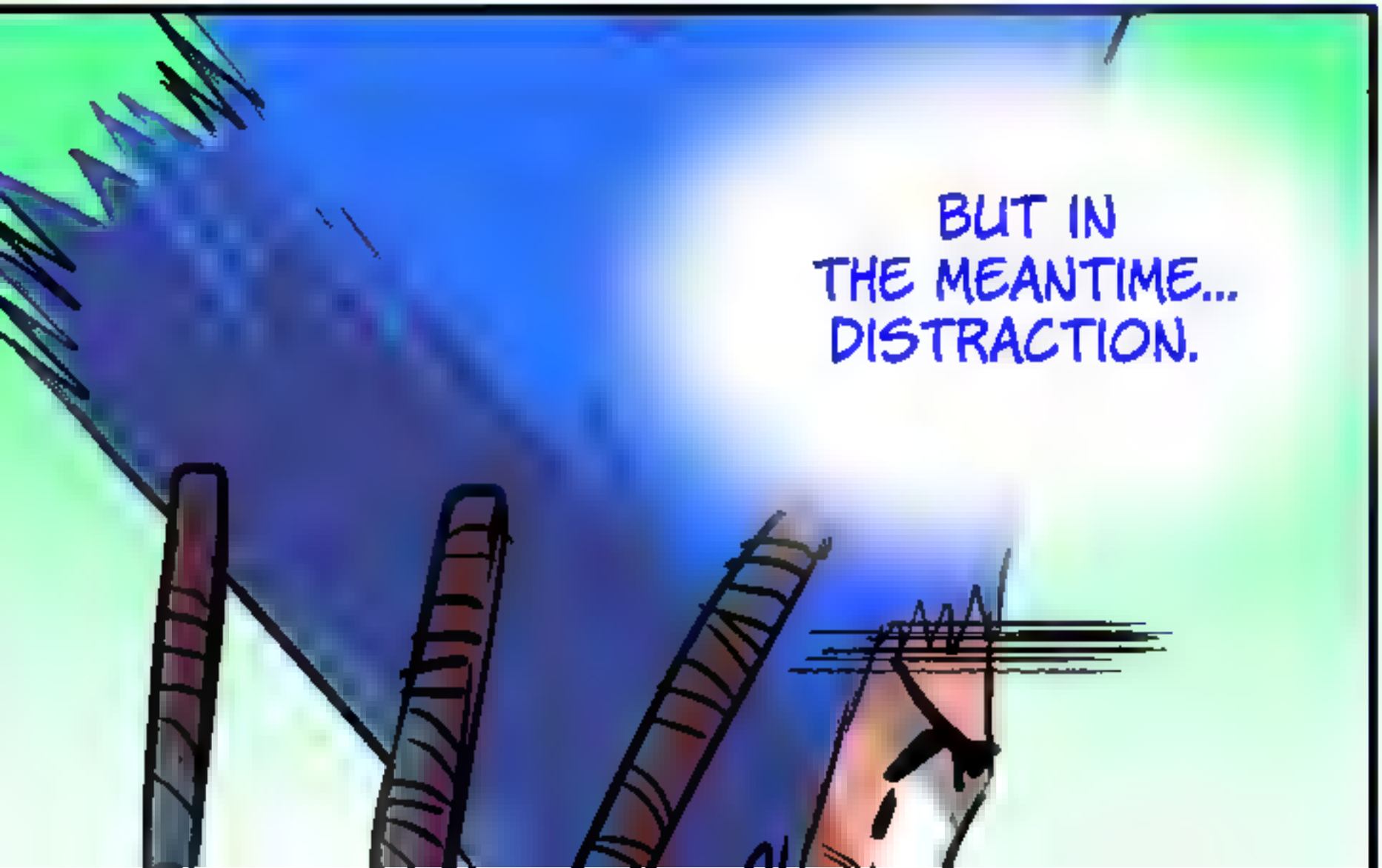
ONLY ONE MORE SWORD TO GO, AND THAT WILL BRING ME UP TO 23, WHICH THEY WON'T REALIZE IS THE NEW

REALIZE IS THE NEW
TOTAL BECAUSE
THEY'VE BEEN
RESET.

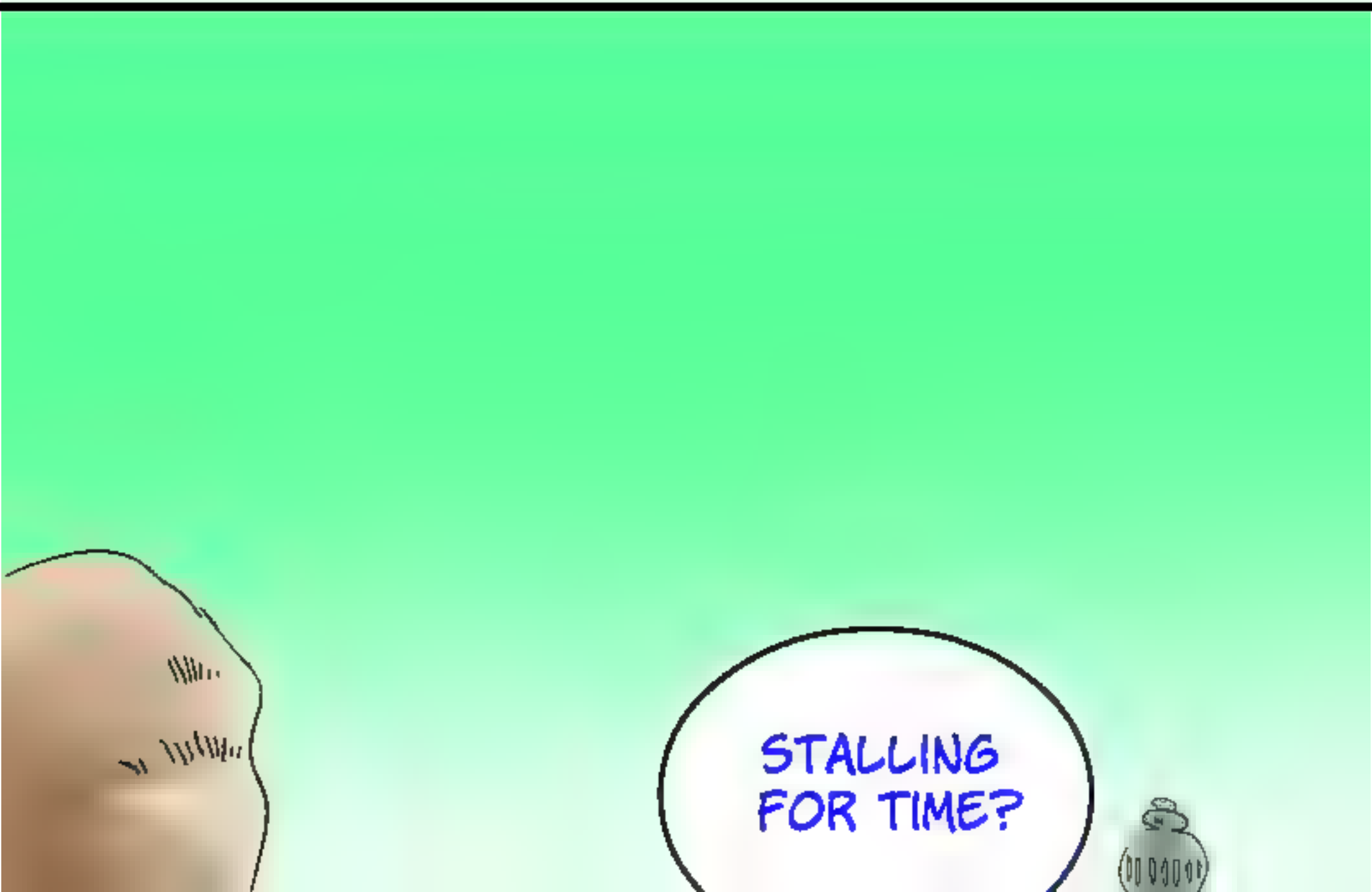

ALTHOUGH GYRUS REMEMBERS AT LEAST ONE OTHER VOYAGE, SO I'LL HAVE TO BE CAREFUL.

HE'S RIDICULOUSLY OUT MATCHED, BUT KNOWING HIM HE'LL HAVE A PLAN TO WIN

ANYWAYS. I NEED TO SWITCH ABILITIES.

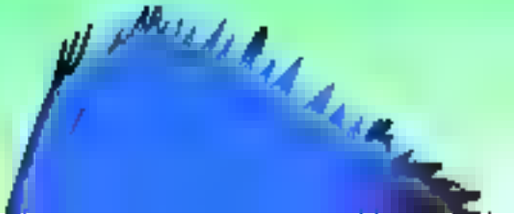


YOU SEEM PRETTY COMMITTED TO THAT LITTLE RECRUITMENT SPEECH YOU KEEP SPILLING.


STALLING FOR TIME?

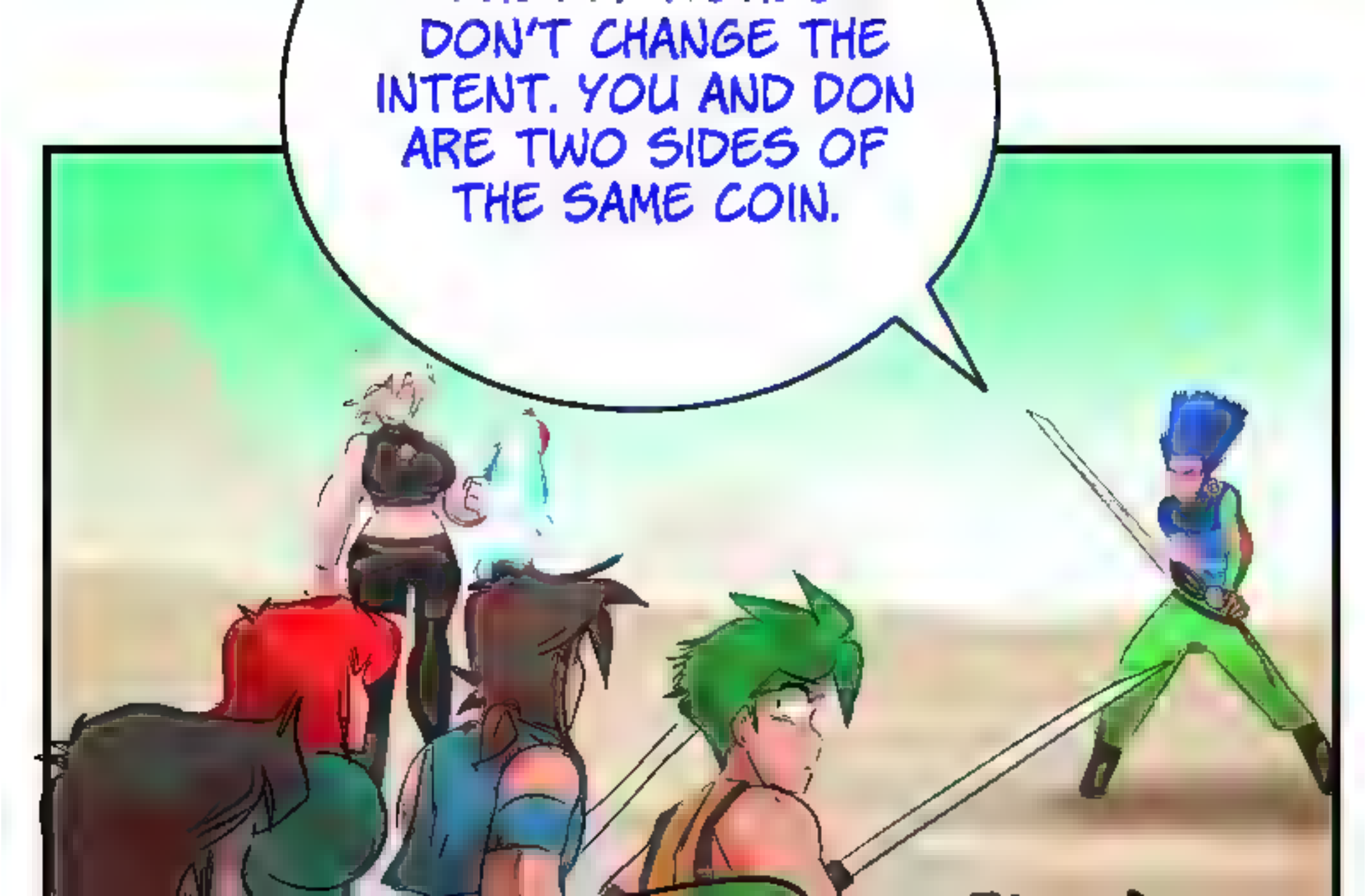
I'M JUST TRYING TO RESOLVE THIS PEACEFULLY. YOU'RE ONE OF US. WE SHOULD WORK TOGETHER.

HA. THAT'S FUNNY. COMING FROM THE MASIOSARE.



I'M
NOT...

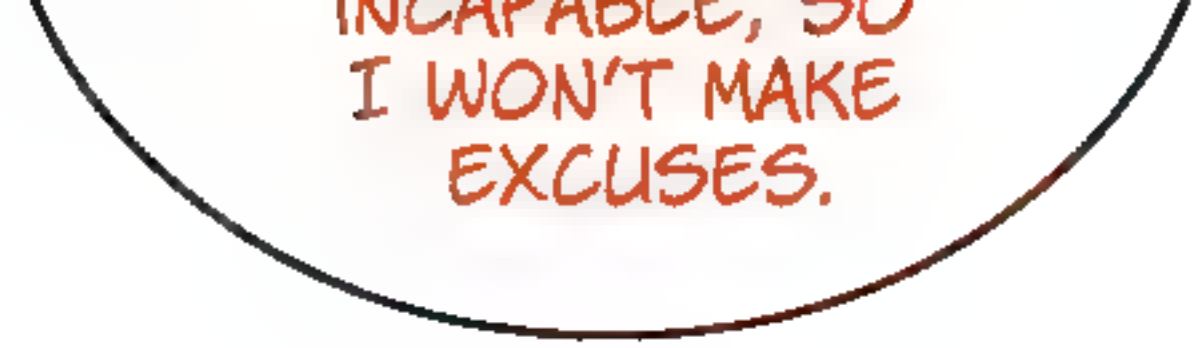
WHAT? CONTROLLING? OBSESSIVE? YOU ACT LIKE YOU'RE SO ABOVE IT ALL, BUT THE MINUTE IT DOESN'T GO YOUR WAY, YOU'LL DO ANYTHING TO GET WHAT YOU WANT.
PRETTY WORDS


DON'T CHANGE THE INTENT. YOU AND DON ARE TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN.

UHM...
YUMEJI?

YOU SPEAK
OF ME AS IF I'M
SOMEONE SCARY OR
DANGEROUS, BUT I
ASSURE YOU, I

I UNDERSTAND
I MUST HAVE DONE
SOMETHING TO EARN
YOUR FEAR, I'M NOT SO
UNAWARE OF MY OWN
FAULTS TO THINK I'M

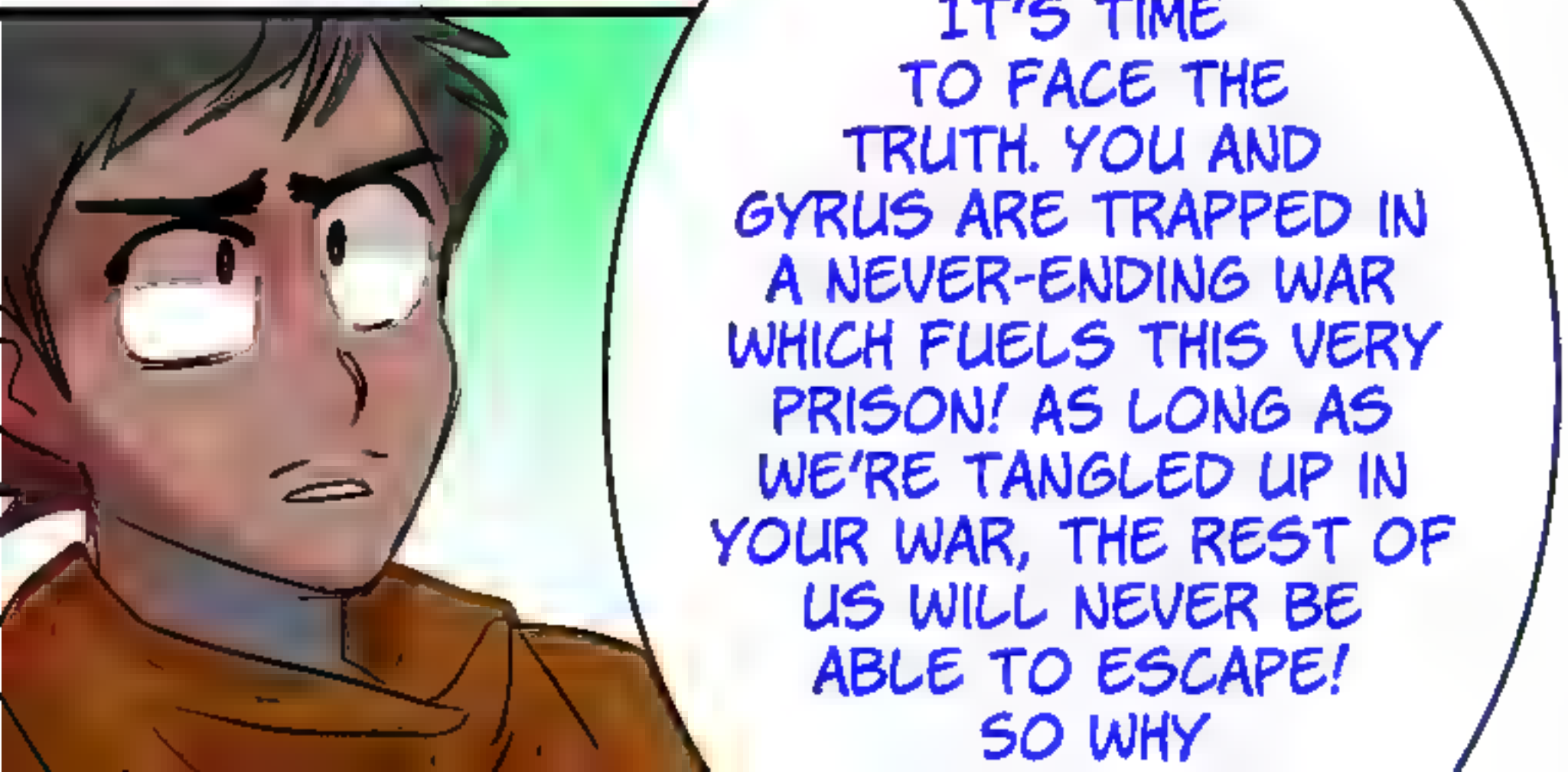

INCAPABLE, SO
I WON'T MAKE
EXCUSES.

BUT IF
THE REASON WE ARE
HERE IS TRULY MY
FAULT, THAN I AM SO,
SO SORRY. AND IF
THESE SWORDS ARE
TRULY SO CORRUPTING
AS TO TURN FRIENDS
AGAINST EACH OTHER,
THAN I WANT NOTHING
TO DO WITH THEM.

WHATEVER IT IS THAT DRIVES

YOU APART, LET IT NOT BE ME. I WILL GLADLY ATONE FOR WHATEVER WRONG I HAVE DONE TO YOU.

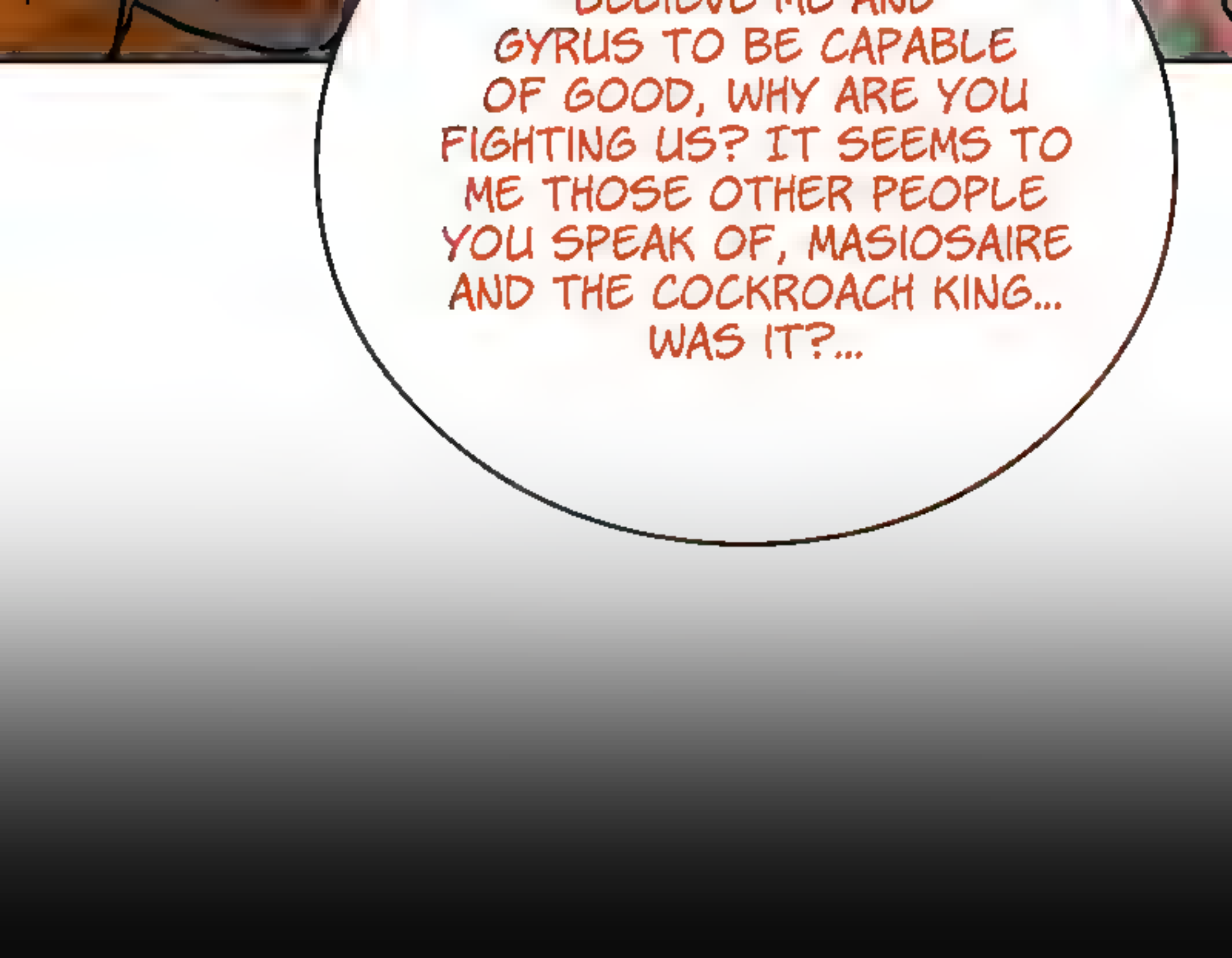
LOOK DON, YOU'RE AN OKAY GUY IF YOU DON'T TOUCH A SWORD. BUT THIS WHOLE "REDEMPTION" THING? WE'VE TRIED THAT BEFORE WITH GYRUS AND LOOK WHERE THAT GOT US! FUCKING MASIOSARE!

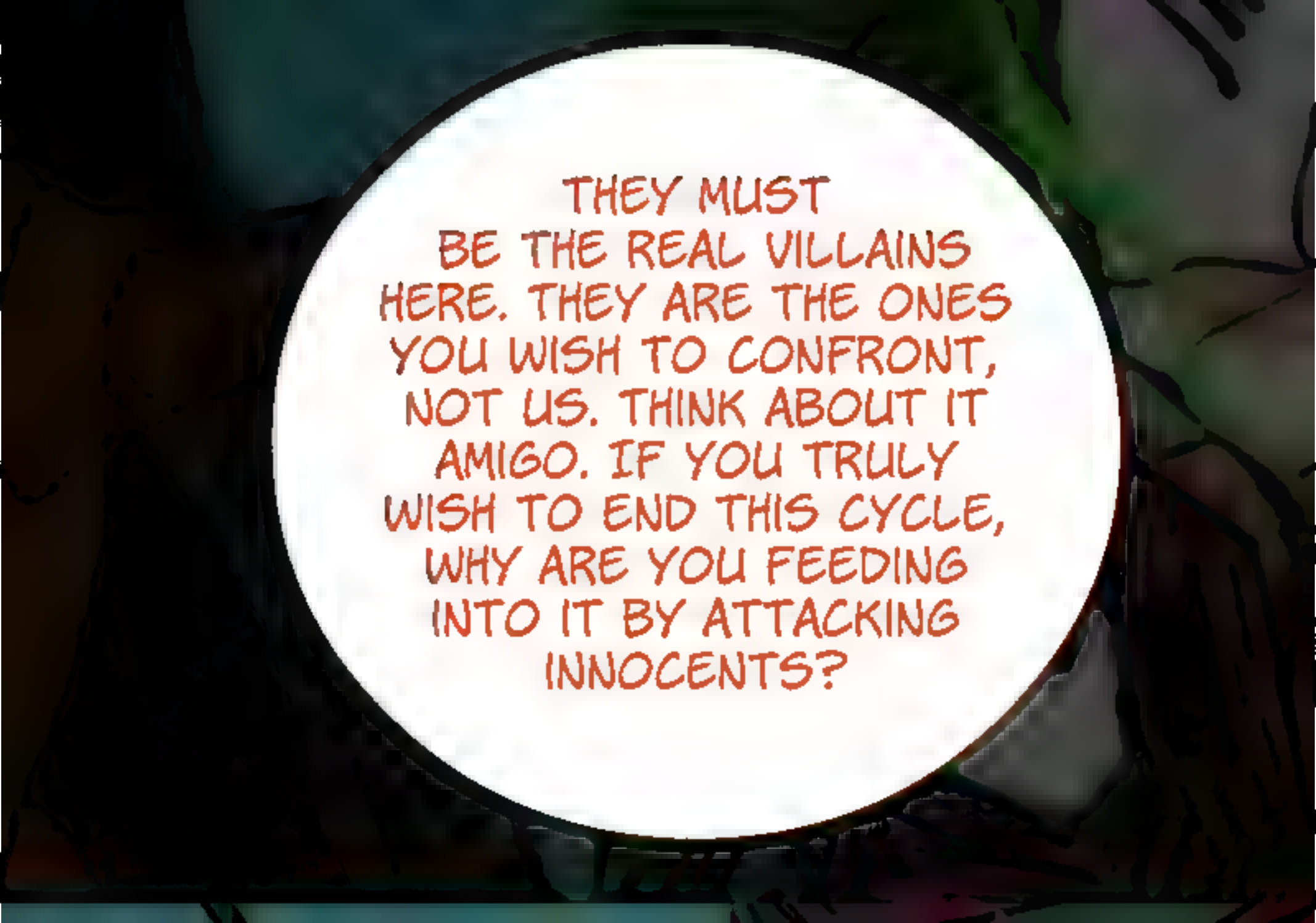

IT'S TIME TO FACE THE TRUTH. YOU AND GYRUS ARE TRAPPED IN A NEVER-ENDING WAR WHICH FUELS THIS VERY PRISON! AS LONG AS WE'RE TANGLED UP IN YOUR WAR, THE REST OF US WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO ESCAPE! SO WHY

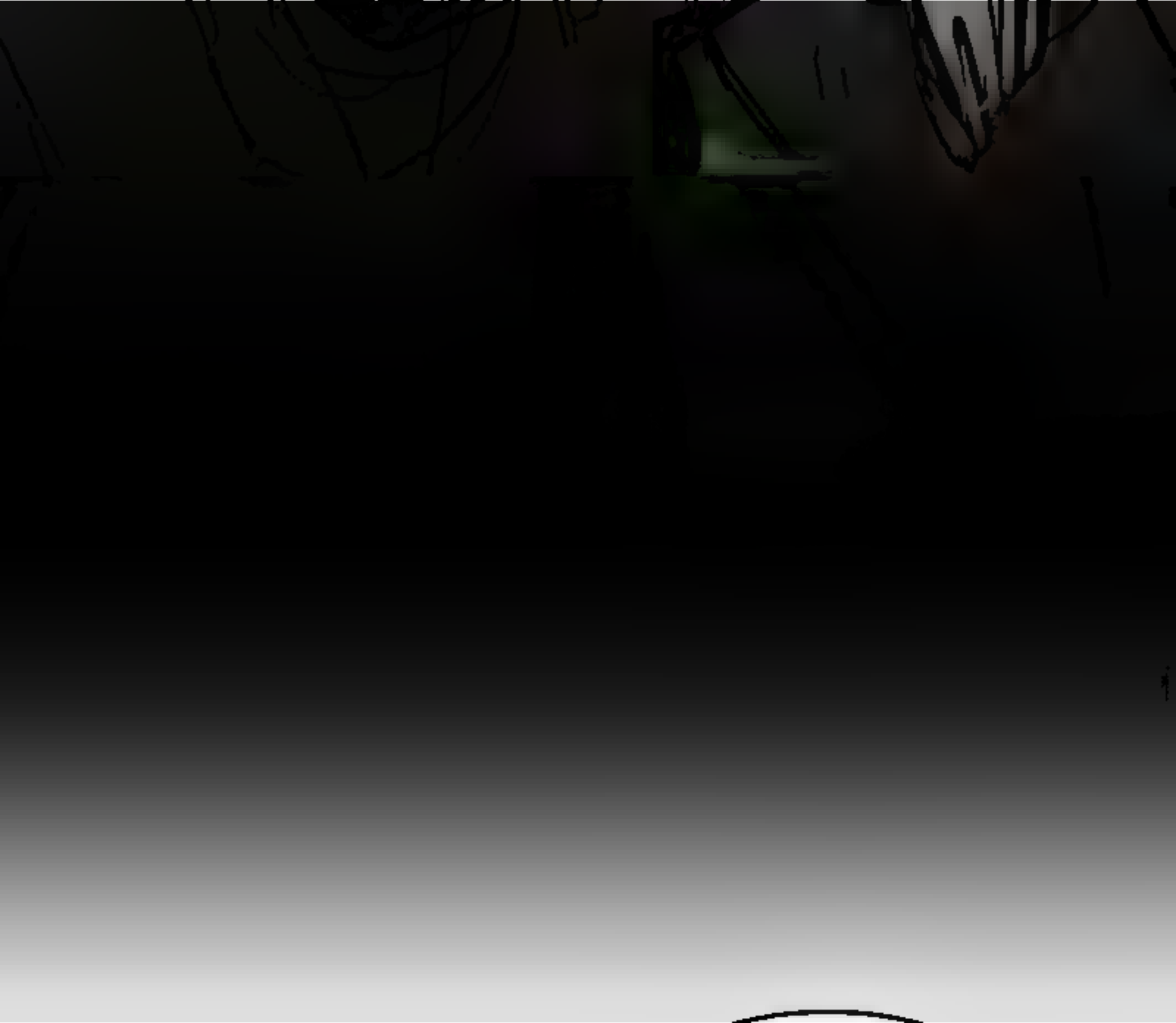
TRY?

IF YOU TRULY DO NOT WANT TO FIGHT THEN WHY ARE YOU STILL TRYING TO DO SO? IT SEEMS YOU'RE NOT AS BEATEN AS YOU CLAIM AMIGO. BUT ONE THING I DON'T UNDERSTAND...

IF YOU
BELIEVE ME AND

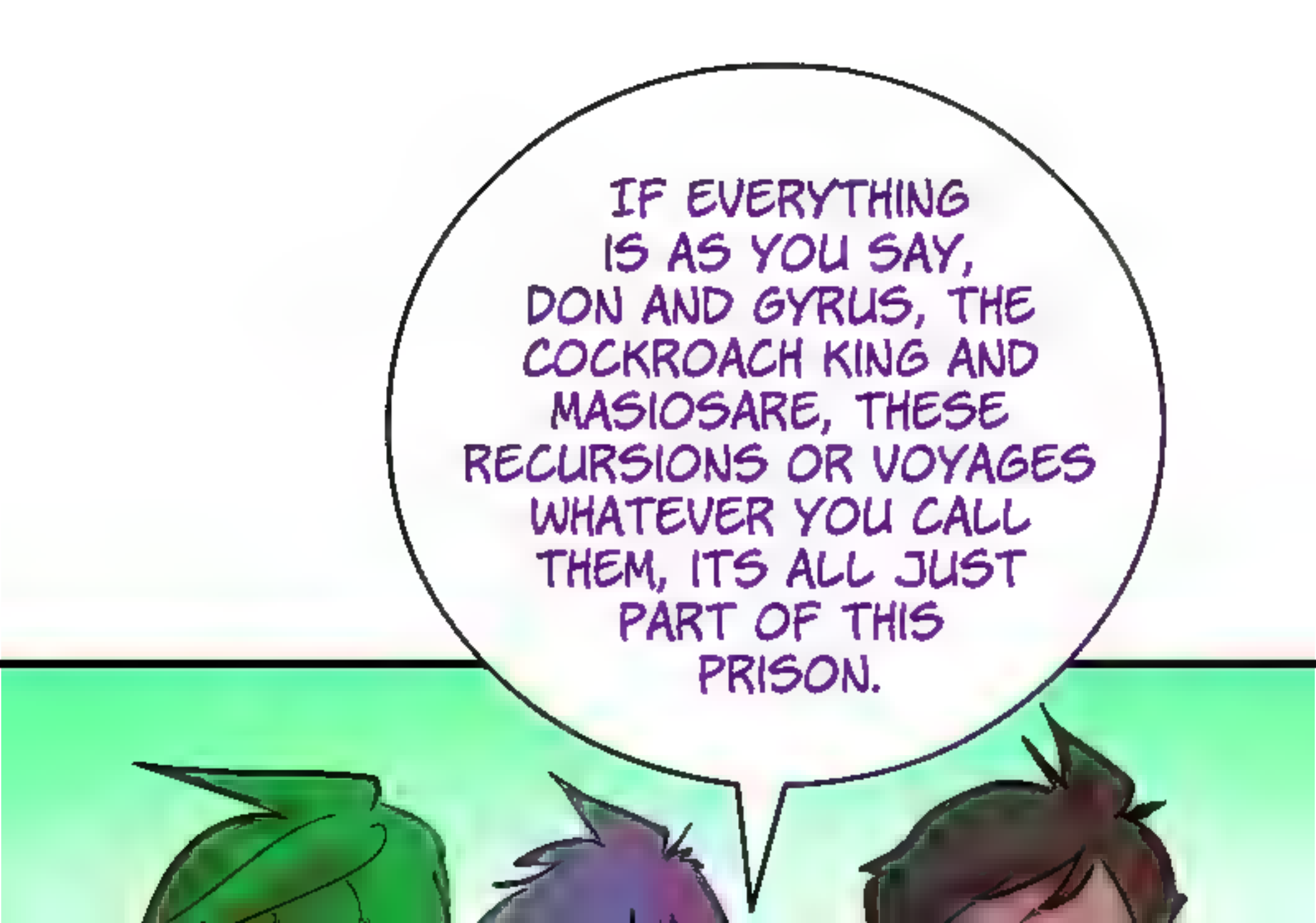

BELIEVE ME AND
GYRUS TO BE CAPABLE
OF GOOD, WHY ARE YOU
FIGHTING US? IT SEEMS TO
ME THOSE OTHER PEOPLE
YOU SPEAK OF, MASIOSAIRE
AND THE COCKROACH KING...
WAS IT?...

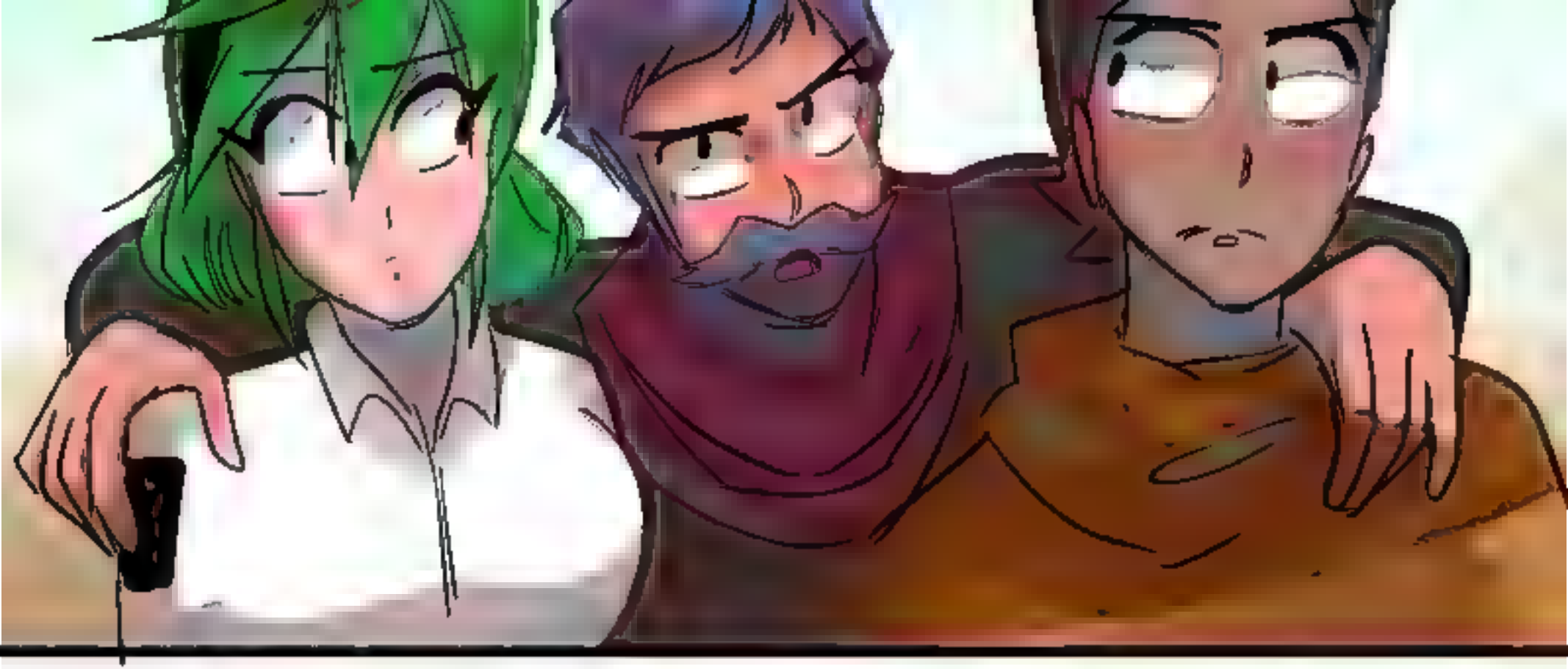

THEY MUST BE THE REAL VILLAINS HERE. THEY ARE THE ONES YOU WISH TO CONFRONT, NOT US. THINK ABOUT IT AMIGO. IF YOU TRULY WISH TO END THIS CYCLE, WHY ARE YOU FEEDING INTO IT BY ATTACKING INNOCENTS?



I HATE TO AGREE WITH DON, BUT HE HAS A POINT.

FIGHTING SOMEONE BECAUSE YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT WHO THEY MIGHT BECOME WILL ONLY LEAD TO YOUR OWN DOOM.


IF EVERYTHING IS AS YOU SAY, DON AND GYRUS, THE COCKROACH KING AND MASIOSARE, THESE RECURSIONS OR VOYAGES WHATEVER YOU CALL THEM, ITS ALL JUST PART OF THIS PRISON.



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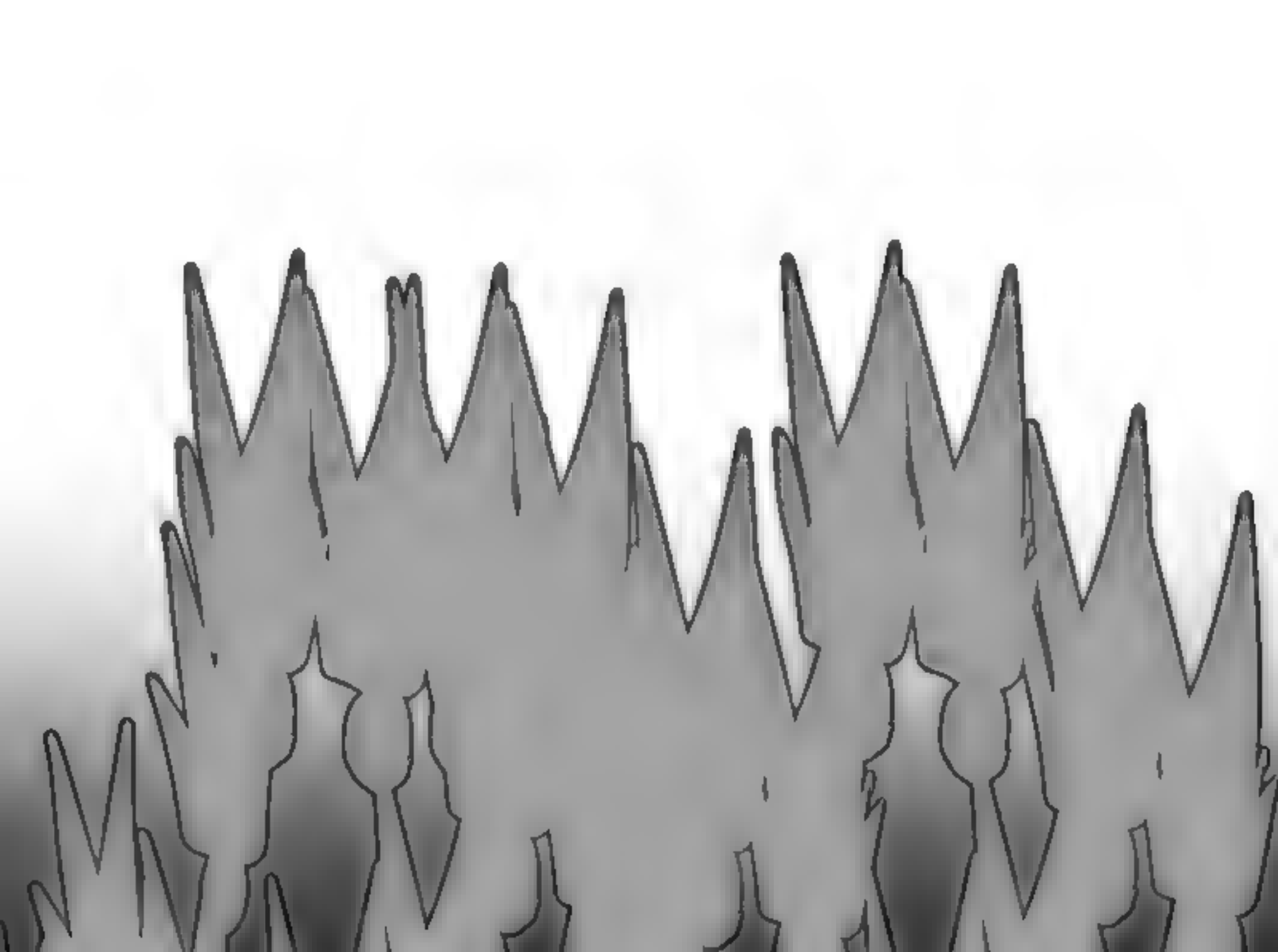
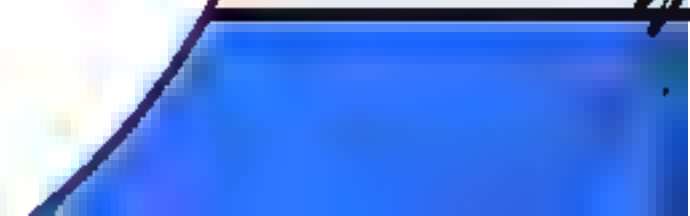
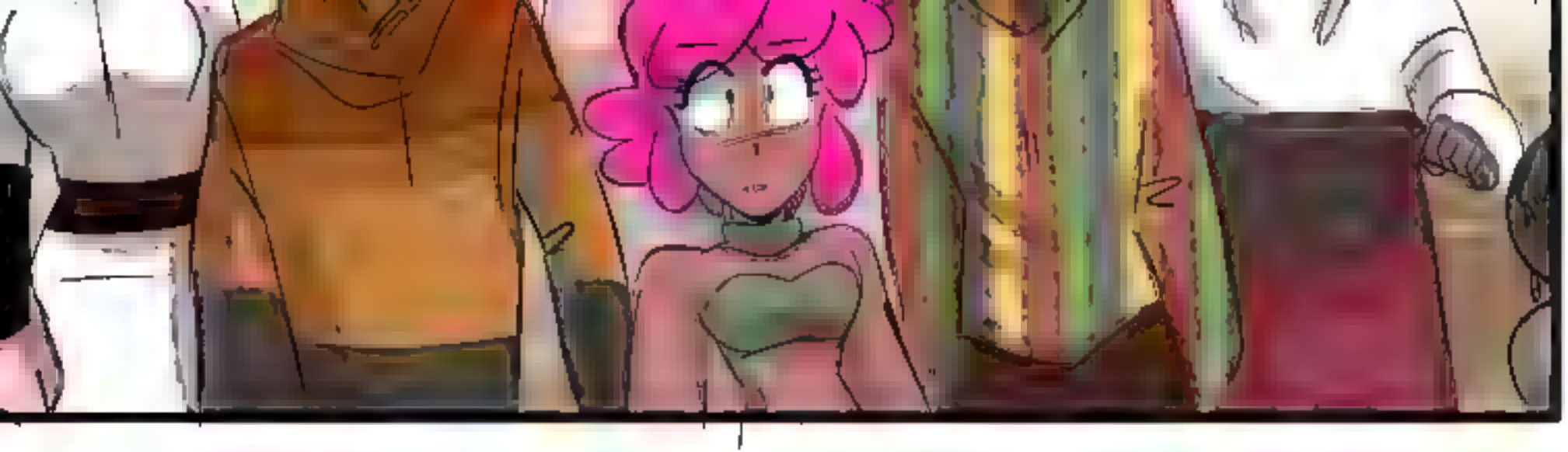
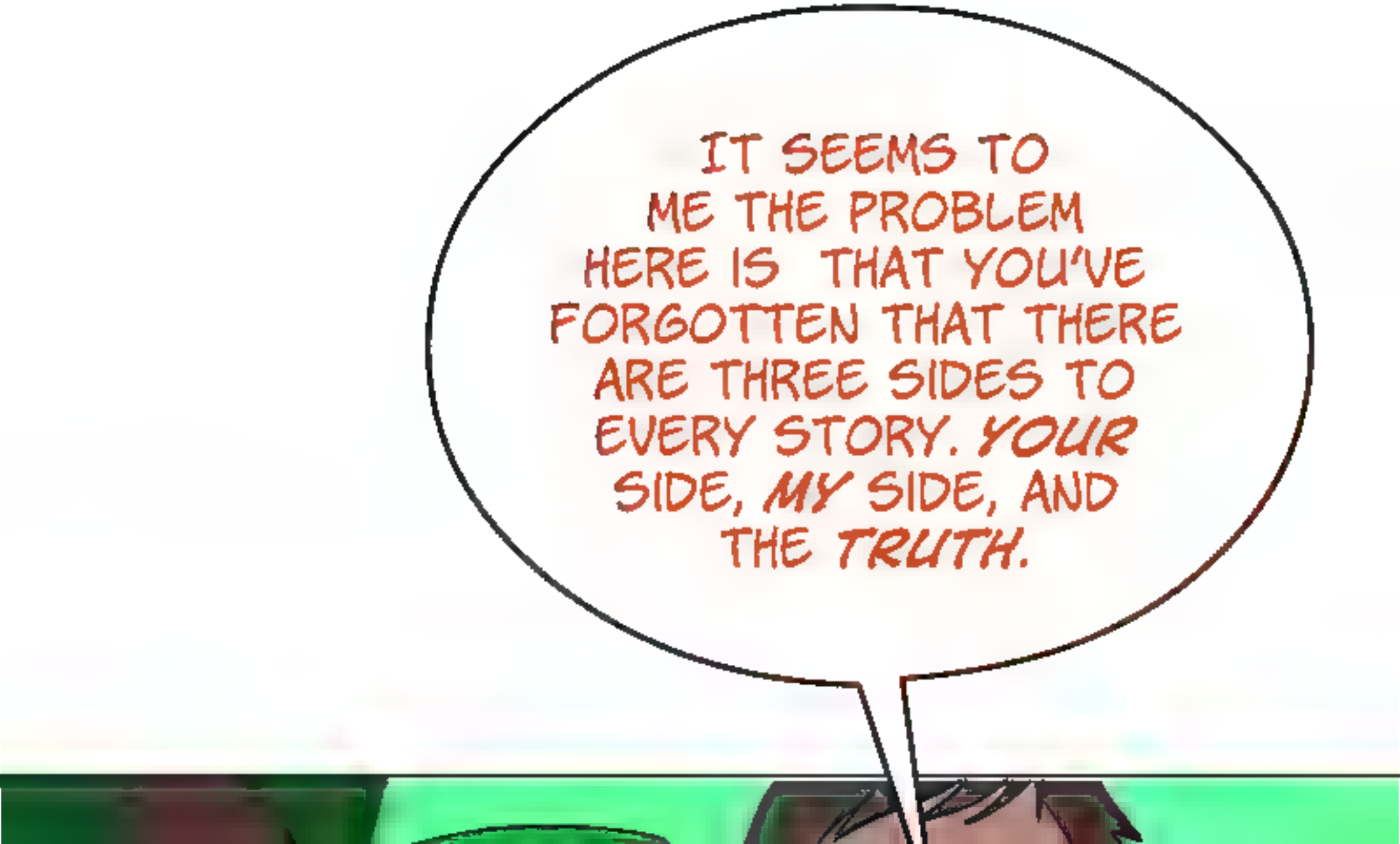


THEN AREN'T WE ALL TRAPPED IN THE SAME ILLUSION, TRICKED INTO FIGHTING EACH OTHER SO WE NEVER QUESTION IT? TAKE IT FROM THE ONES WHO HAD TO LIVE THROUGH THAT, ITS NOT WORTH THE HEARTBREAK.



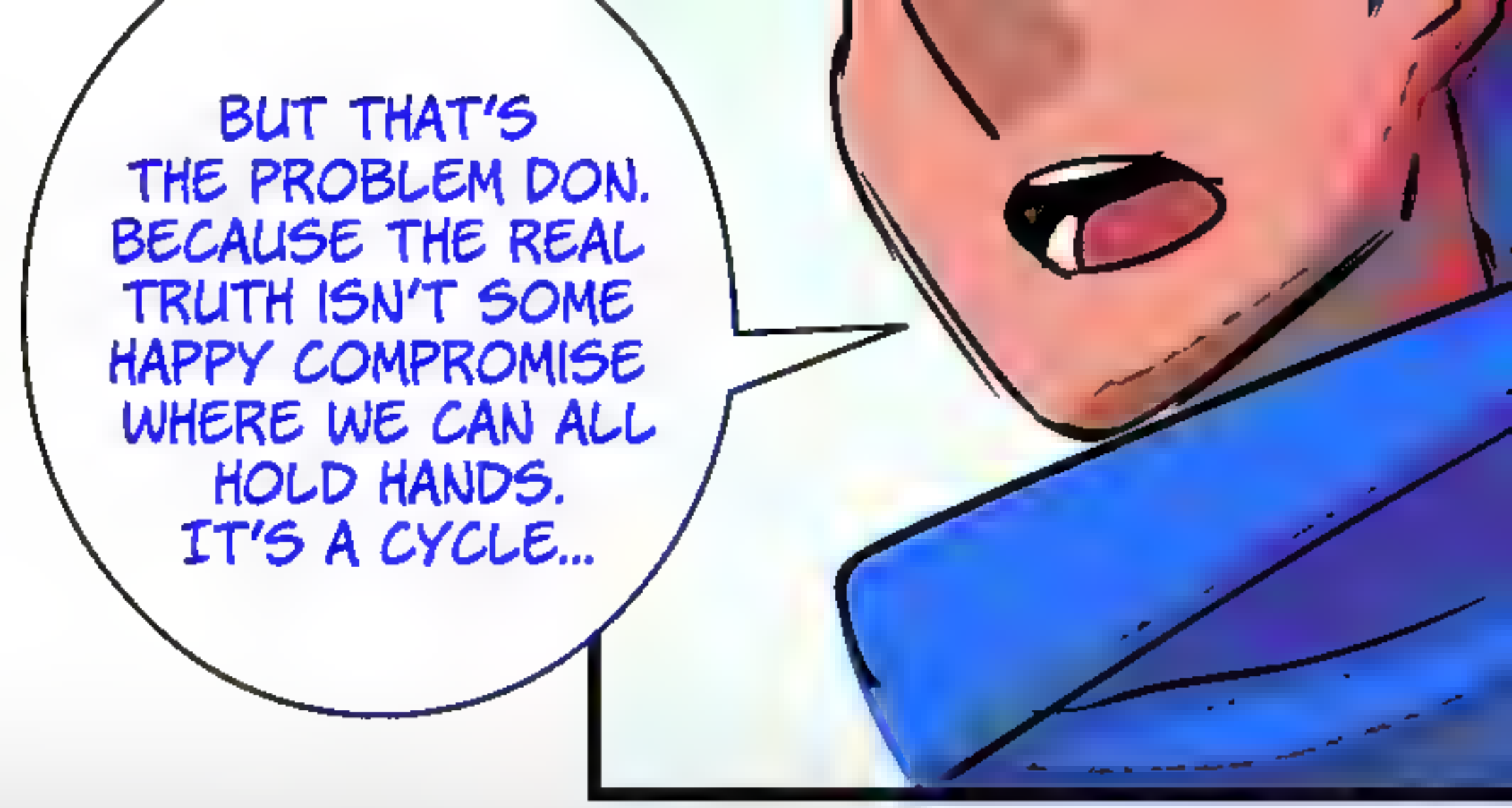
I DON'T KNOW YOU. I DON'T REALLY KNOW ANY OF YOU. BUT I'VE SEEN YOU FIGHT MONSTERS WITH BARELY ANYTHING AND COME OUT ALIVE, I'VE SEEN WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR WHAT YOU BELIEVE IN, BE IT STAYING OR RUNNING AWAY.



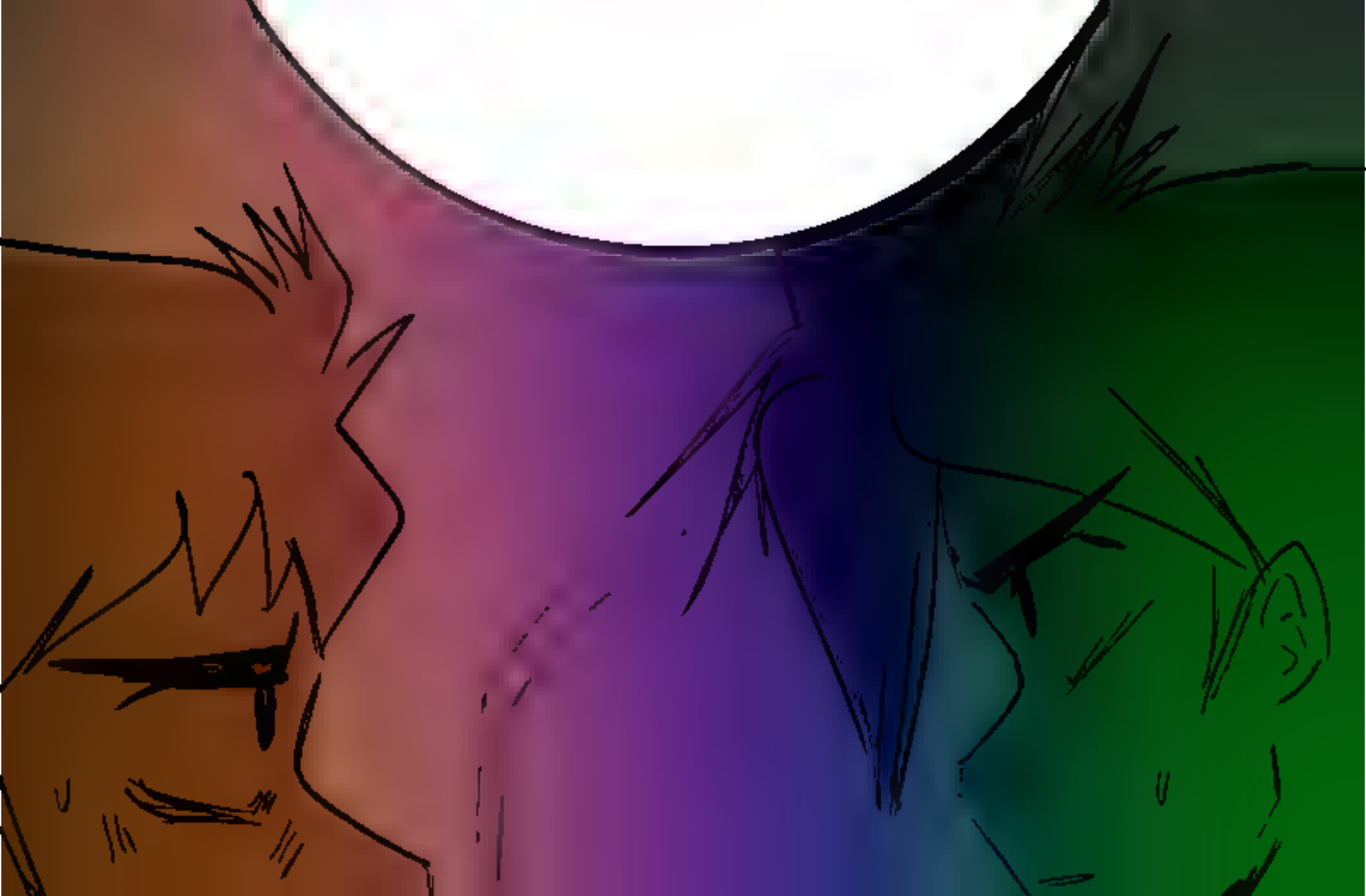

IT SEEMS TO ME THE PROBLEM HERE IS THAT YOU'VE FORGOTTEN THAT THERE ARE THREE SIDES TO EVERY STORY. YOUR SIDE, MY SIDE, AND THE TRUTH.

BUT GUESS WHAT? NO ONE IS LYING. WE'RE ALL JUST BEING TRYING TO GET AT THE SAME TRUTH,

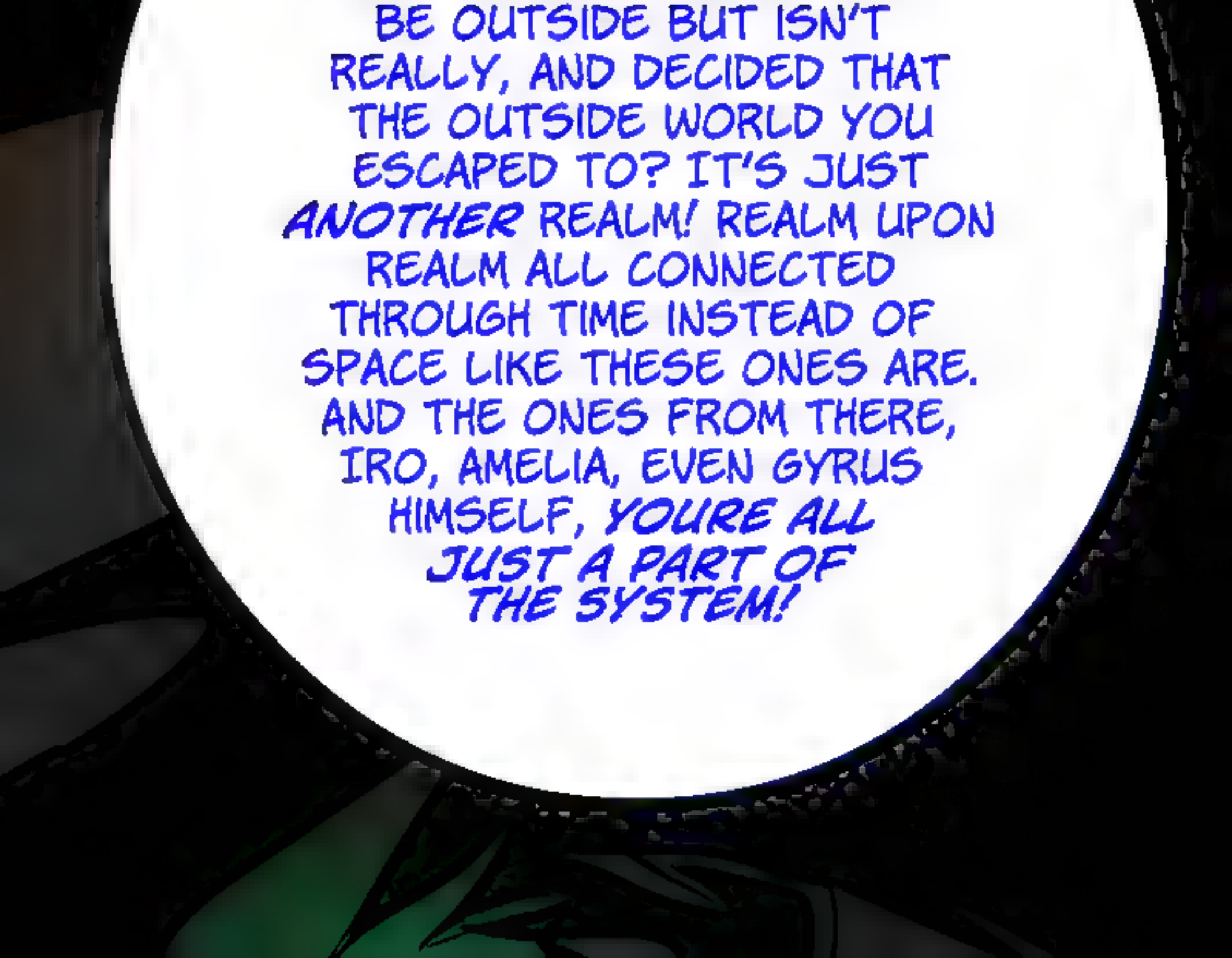
AND IT SEEMS TO ME BY WORKING TOGETHER WE'LL FINALLY ARRIVE THERE.


BUT THAT'S THE PROBLEM DON. BECAUSE THE REAL TRUTH ISN'T SOME HAPPY COMPROMISE WHERE WE CAN ALL HOLD HANDS. IT'S A CYCLE...

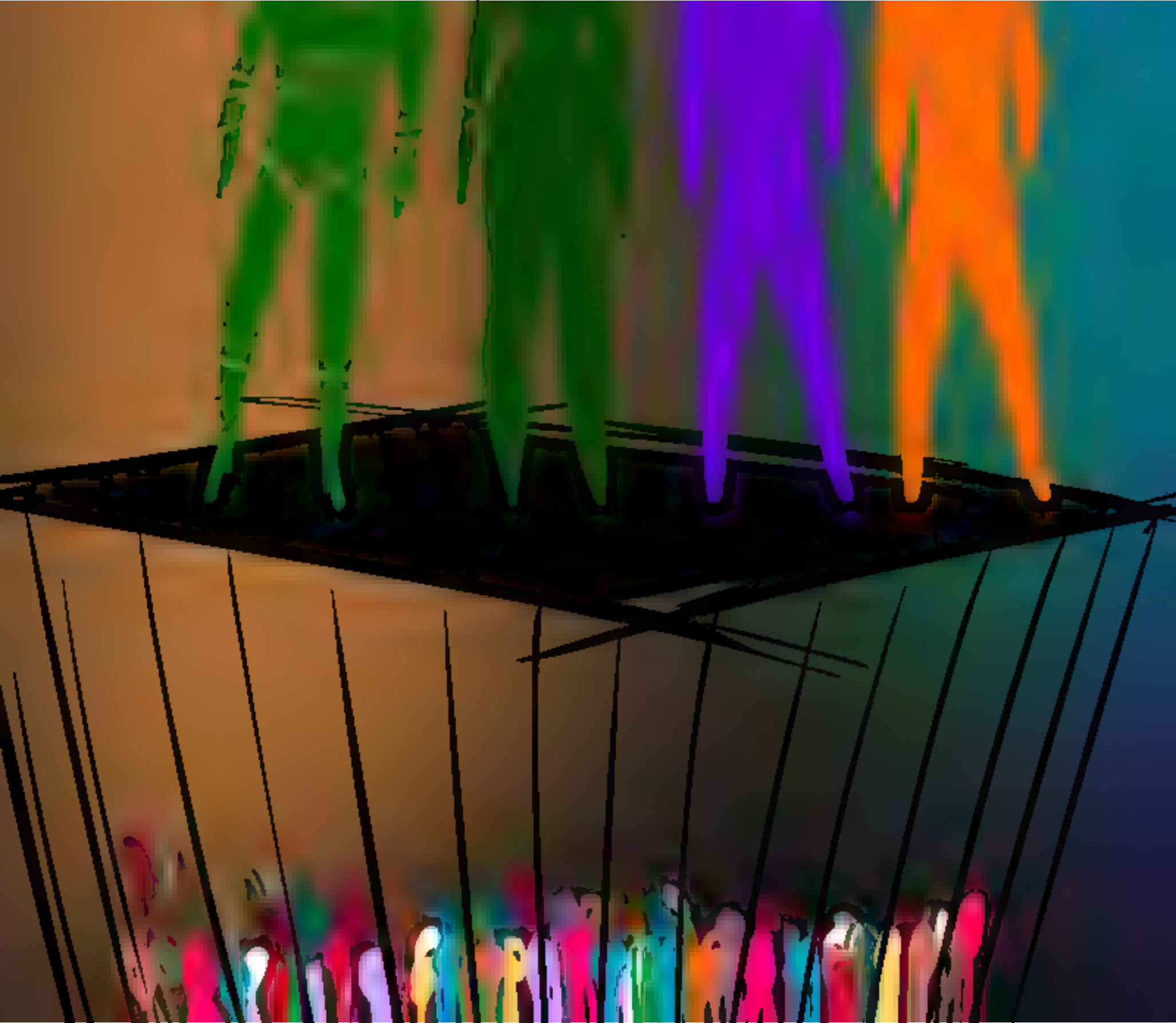
THE TRUTH IS A SCRIPTED BATTLE WRITTEN INTO THE VERY FABRIC OF THE ROOM OF SWORDS. HELL, EVEN I USED TO HAVE SOME FAITH WE COULD GET OUT. BUT AFTER ALL THOSE VOYAGES TOGETHER, GAINING POWER TO FACE THE COCKROACH KING, GYRUS WELL...

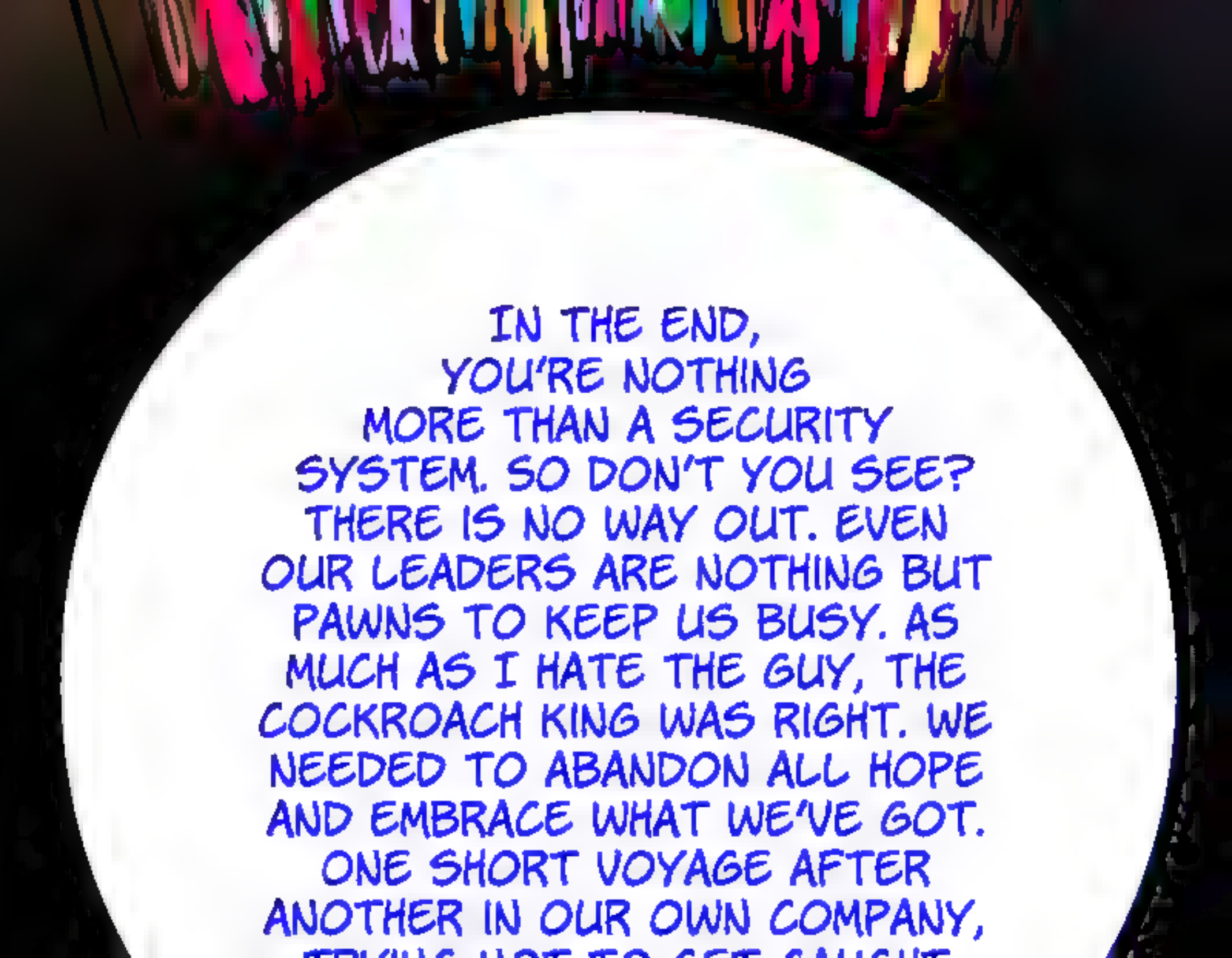


HE...STARTED
ASKING QUESTIONS.
ABOUT THE VSC, AND THE
WORLD THAT SEEMS TO


BE OUTSIDE BUT ISN'T
REALLY, AND DECIDED THAT
THE OUTSIDE WORLD YOU
ESCAPED TO? IT'S JUST
ANOTHER REALM! REALM UPON
REALM ALL CONNECTED
THROUGH TIME INSTEAD OF
SPACE LIKE THESE ONES ARE.
AND THE ONES FROM THERE,
IRO, AMELIA, EVEN GYRUS
HIMSELF, YOURE ALL
JUST A PART OF
THE SYSTEM!

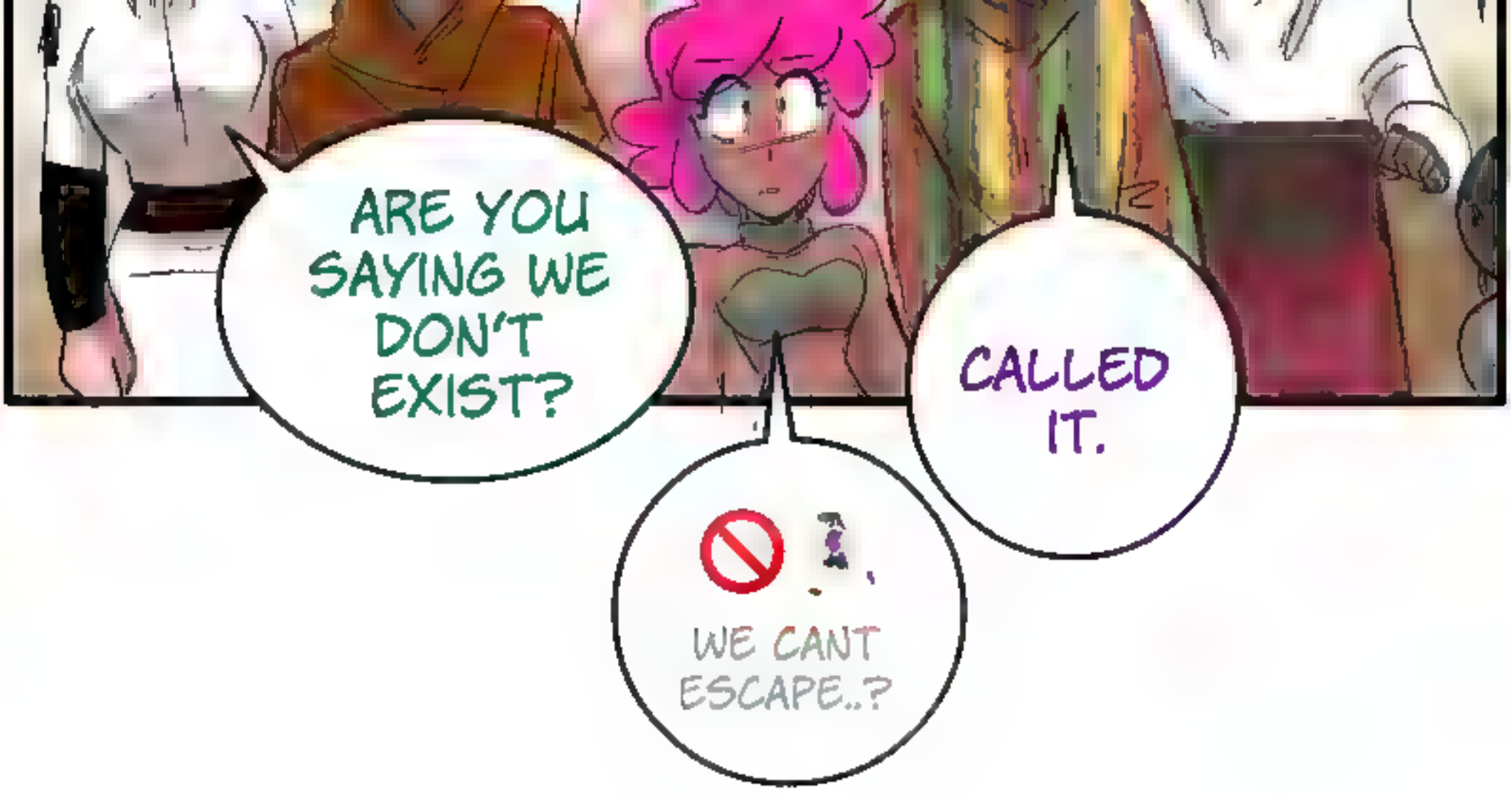
YOU WERE CREATED BY THE ROOM OF SWORDS! YOUR WHOLE PURPOSE IS TO KEEP US FROM ESCAPING.



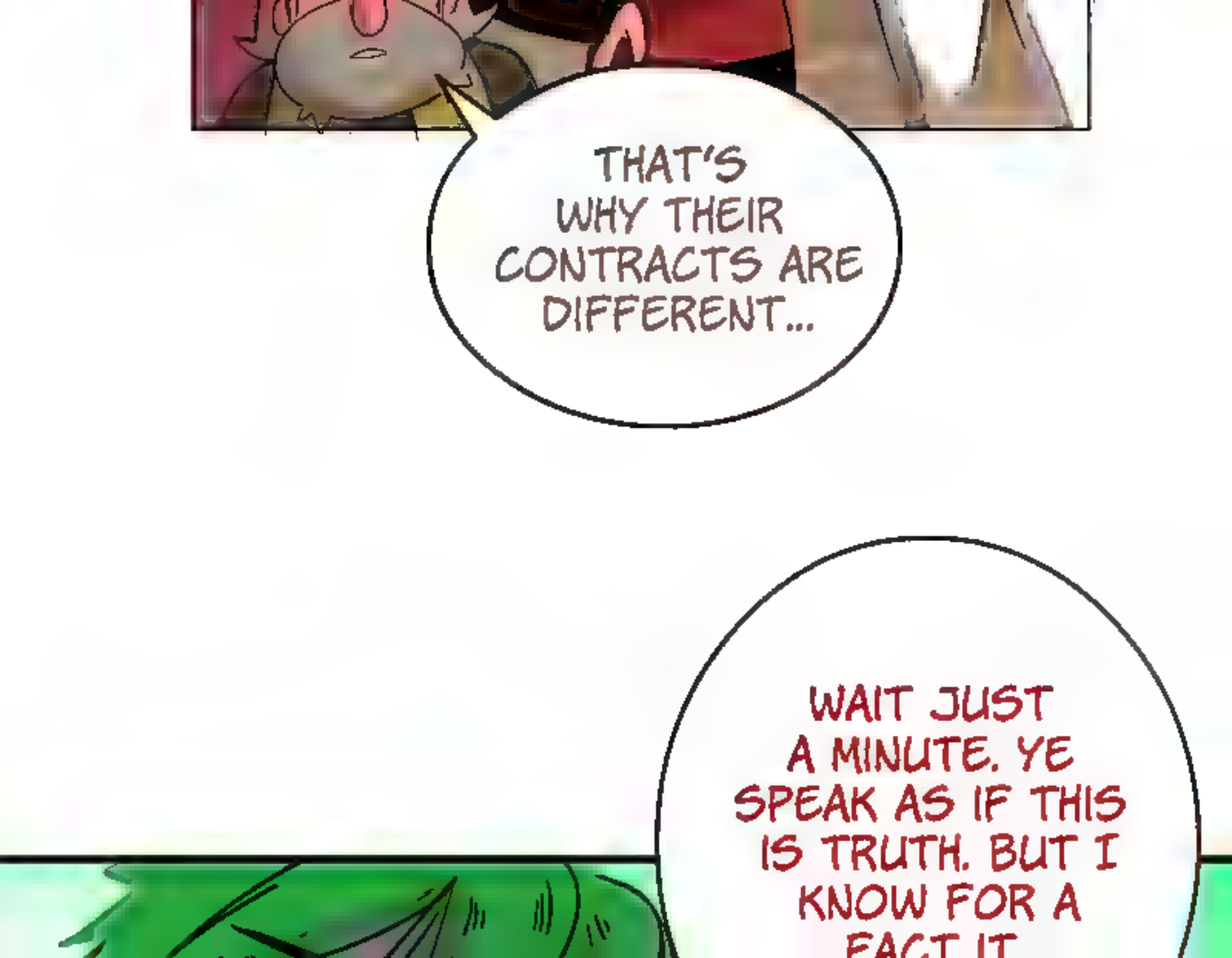

IN THE END,
YOU'RE NOTHING
MORE THAN A SECURITY
SYSTEM. SO DON'T YOU SEE?
THERE IS NO WAY OUT. EVEN
OUR LEADERS ARE NOTHING BUT
PAWNS TO KEEP US BUSY. AS
MUCH AS I HATE THE GUY, THE
COCKROACH KING WAS RIGHT. WE
NEEDED TO ABANDON ALL HOPE
AND EMBRACE WHAT WE'VE GOT.
ONE SHORT VOYAGE AFTER
ANOTHER IN OUR OWN COMPANY,

TRYING NOT TO GET CAUGHT
BY THE COCKROACH KING!

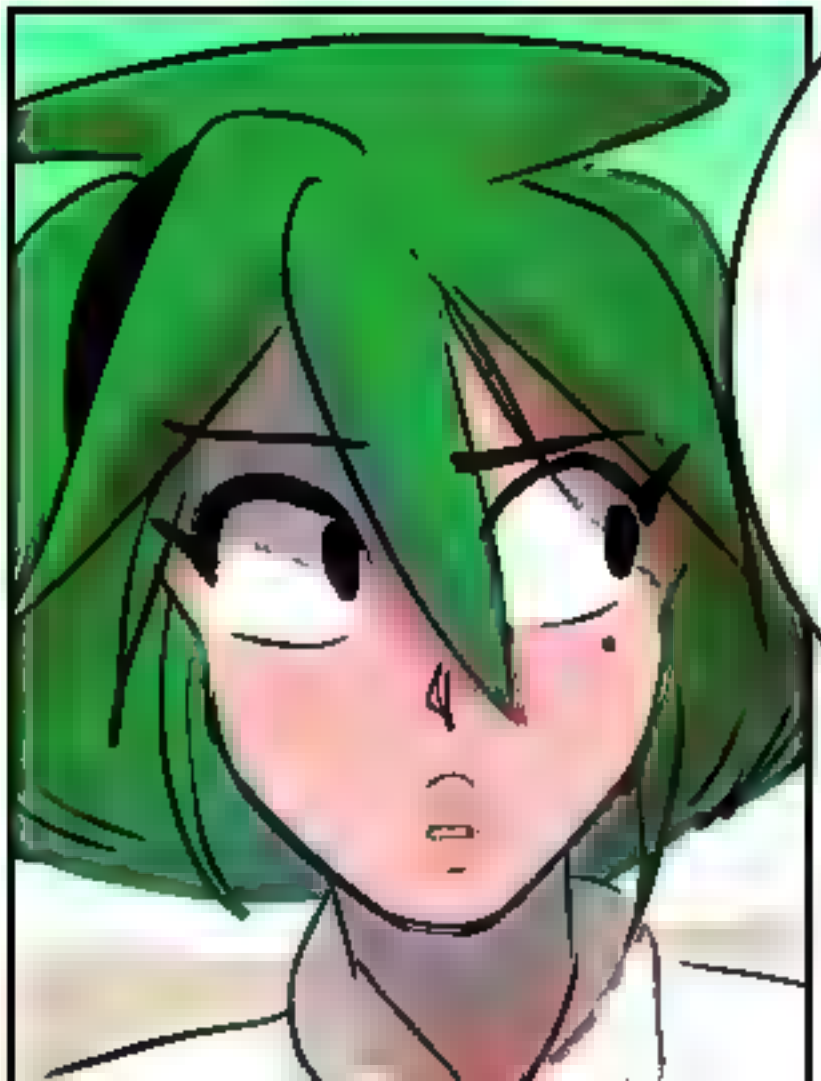
THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE...


ARE YOU SAYING WE DON'T EXIST?
CALLED IT.
WE CANT ESCAPE..?

SO GYRUS IS AN NPC...LIKE KNOX? THAT'S NOT SO BAD...WE COULD JUST REPROGRAM HIM...


THAT'S WHY THEIR CONTRACTS ARE DIFFERENT...
WAIT JUST A MINUTE. YE SPEAK AS IF THIS IS TRUTH. BUT I KNOW FOR A

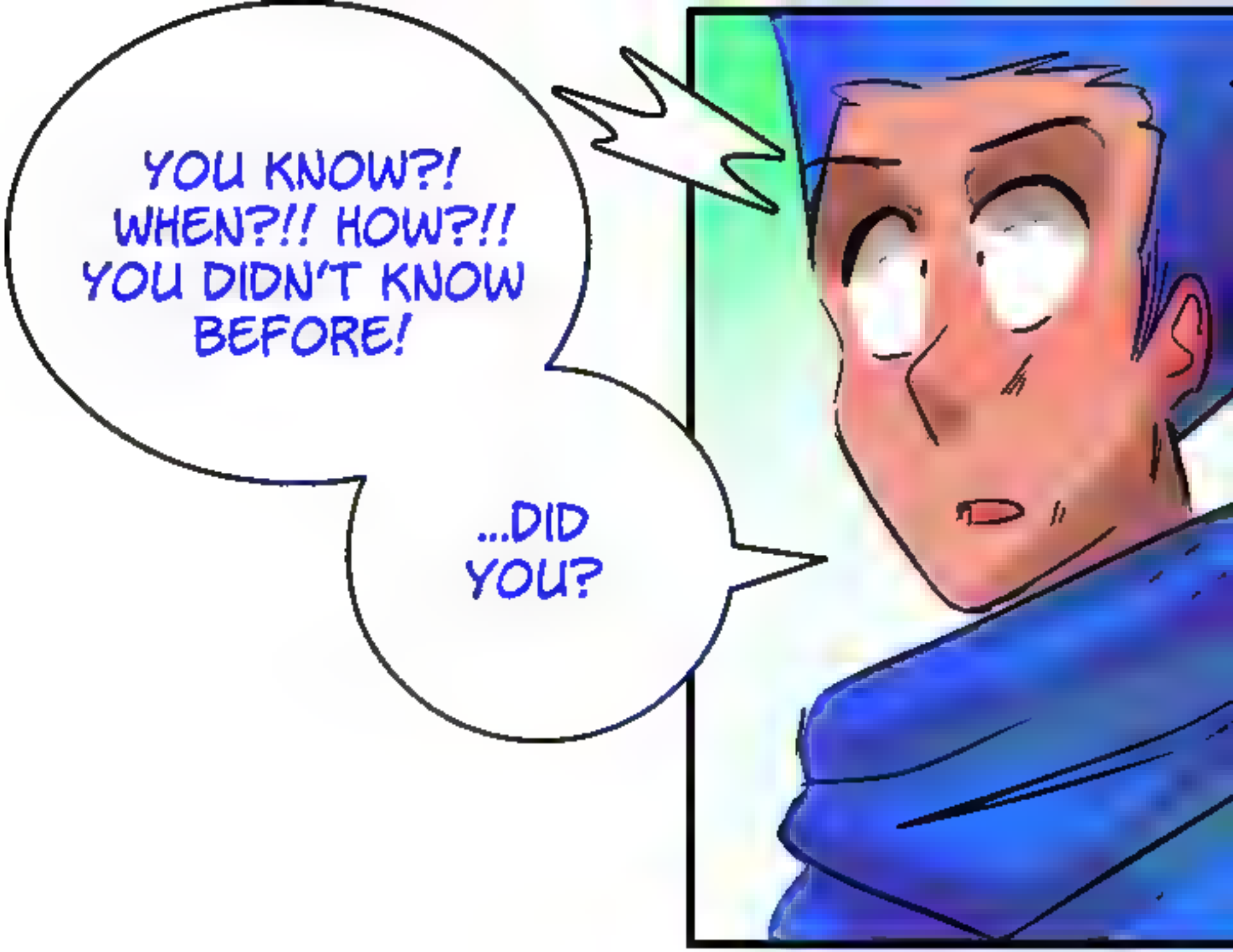
IS NOT.



I HAVE SERVED MY QUEEN FOR MANY YEARS BEFORE I CAME HERE. IF I AM REAL, SHE MUST BE TOO.

THAT'S TRUE! GYRUS, AMELIA, EVEN IRO, THEY ALL HAVE BACKGROUNDS, LIVES, HISTORIES. HOW IS THAT DIFFERENT FROM US?

NO, HE'S RIGHT. ME, AMELIA, AND IRO, WE AREN'T REAL. NOT IN THE TRADITIONAL SENSE.


YOU KNOW?!
WHEN?!! HOW?!!
YOU DIDN'T KNOW
BEFORE!
...DID
YOU?

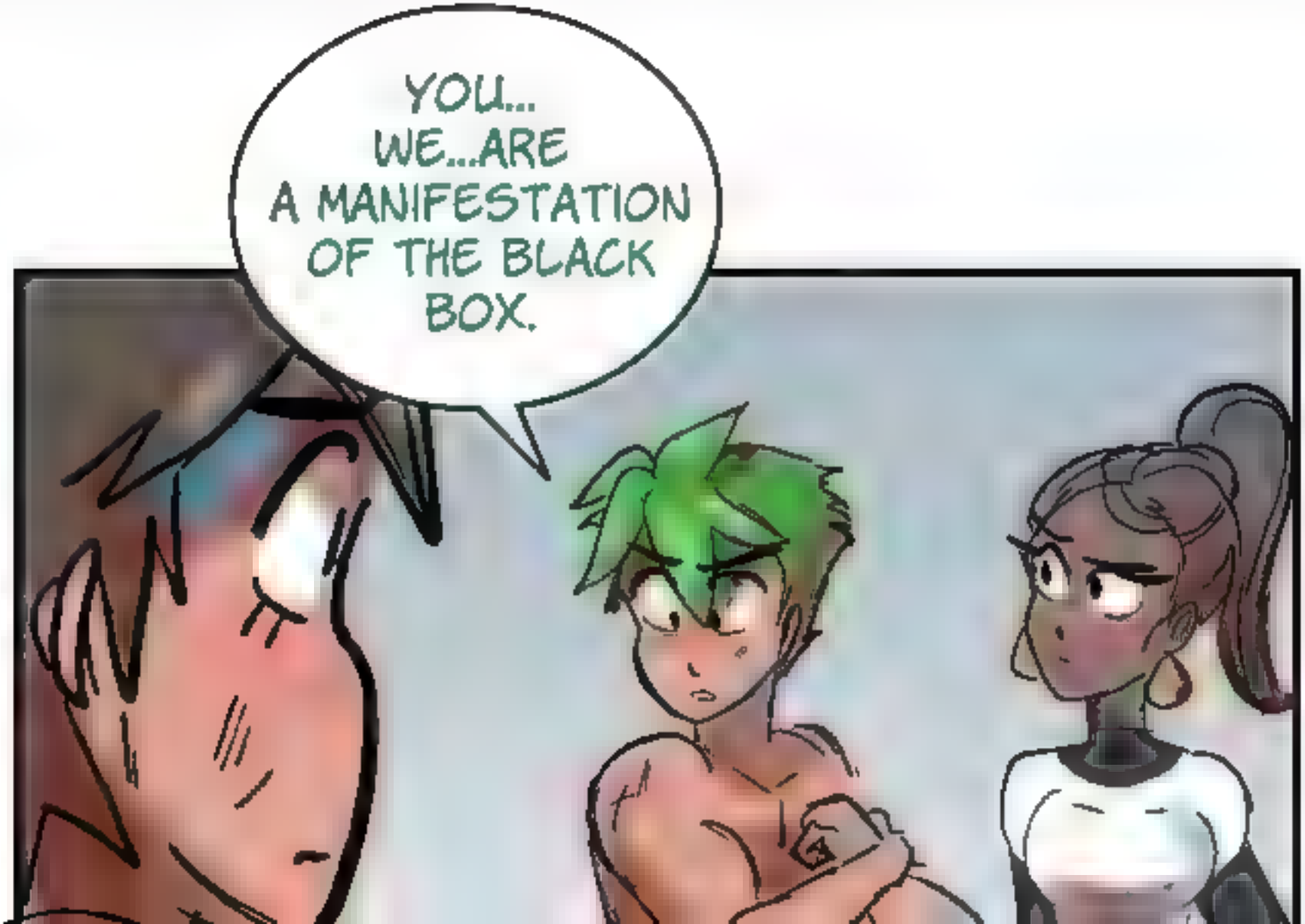
I THINK SO. I LEARNED JUST AFTER THE COCKROACH KING TOOK OVER.

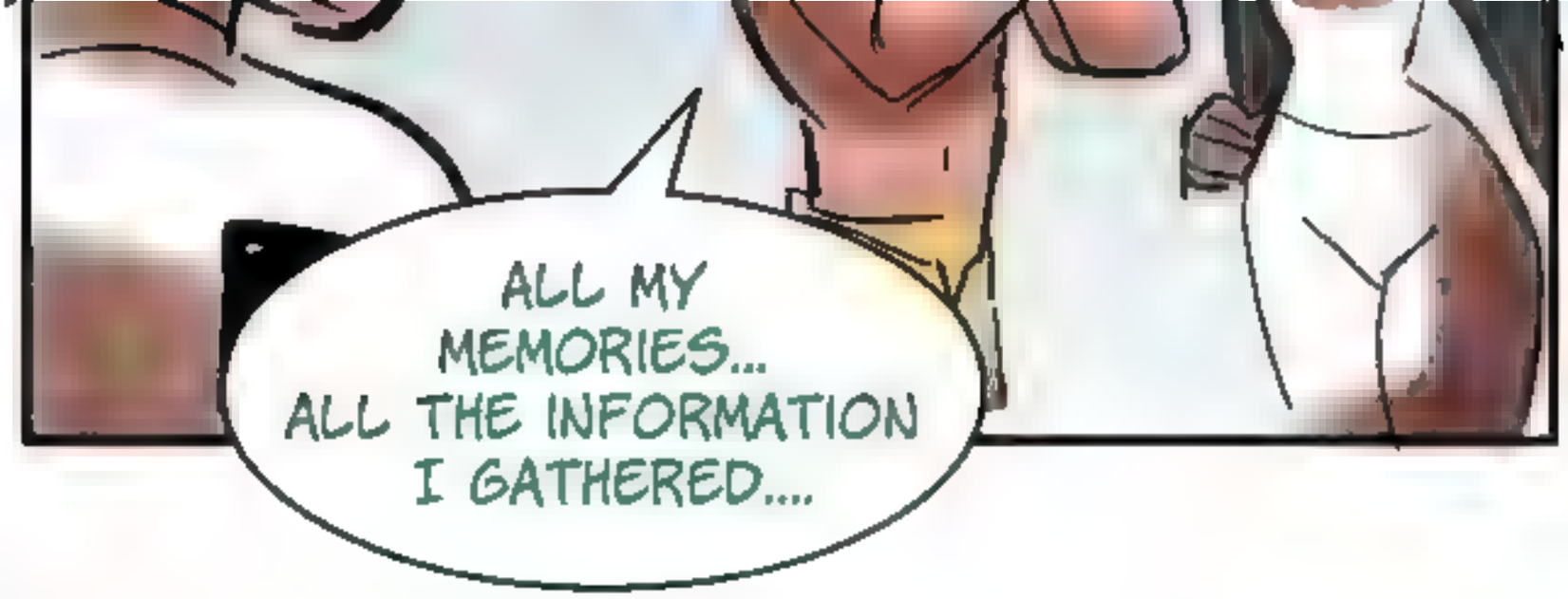
WAIT SO
YOU KNEW YOU

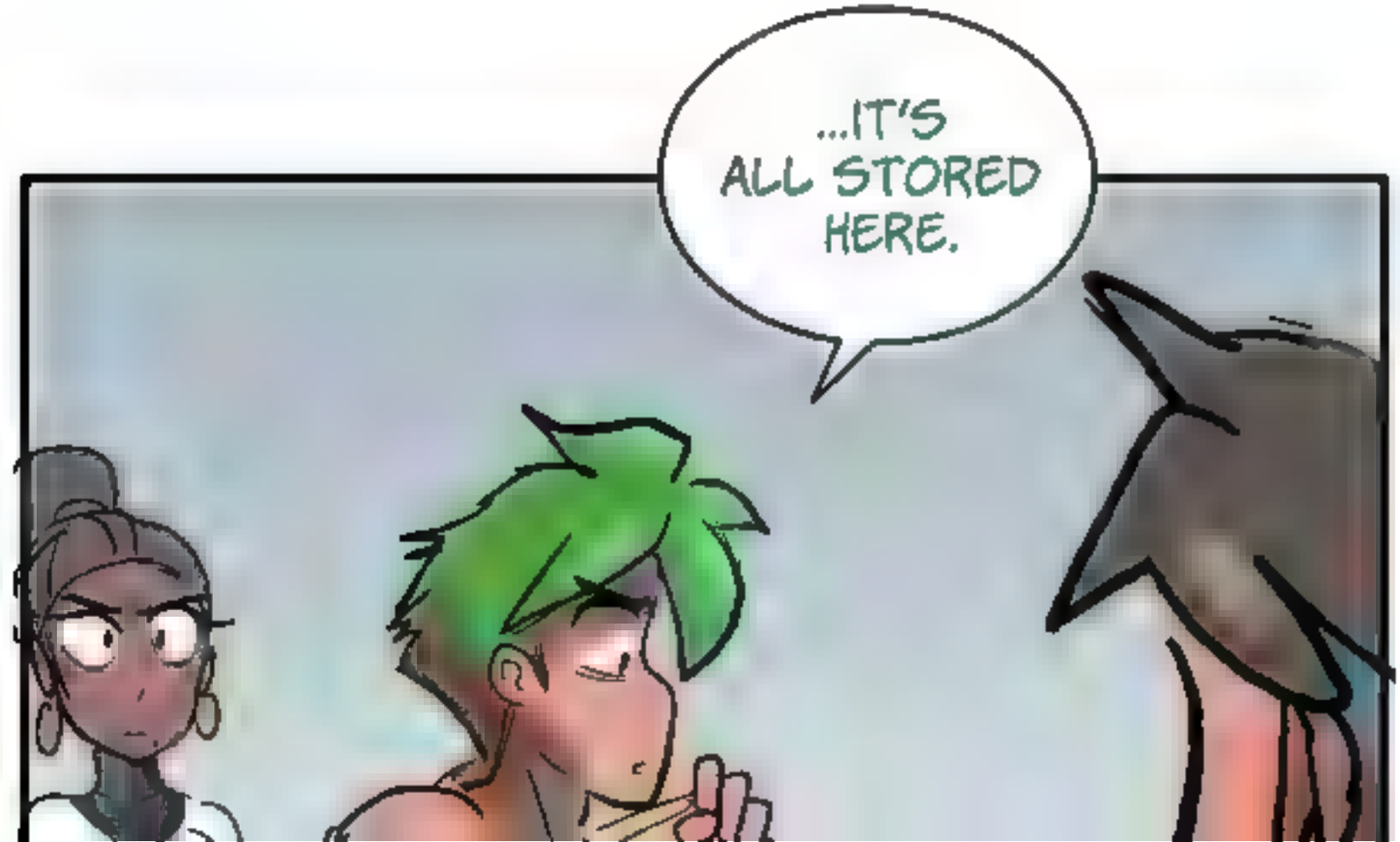
WERE AN NPC THIS WHOLE TIME? WHY ARE YOU STILL TRYING TO GET OUT?
YOU KNOW YOU CAN'T LEAVE YOURSELF!

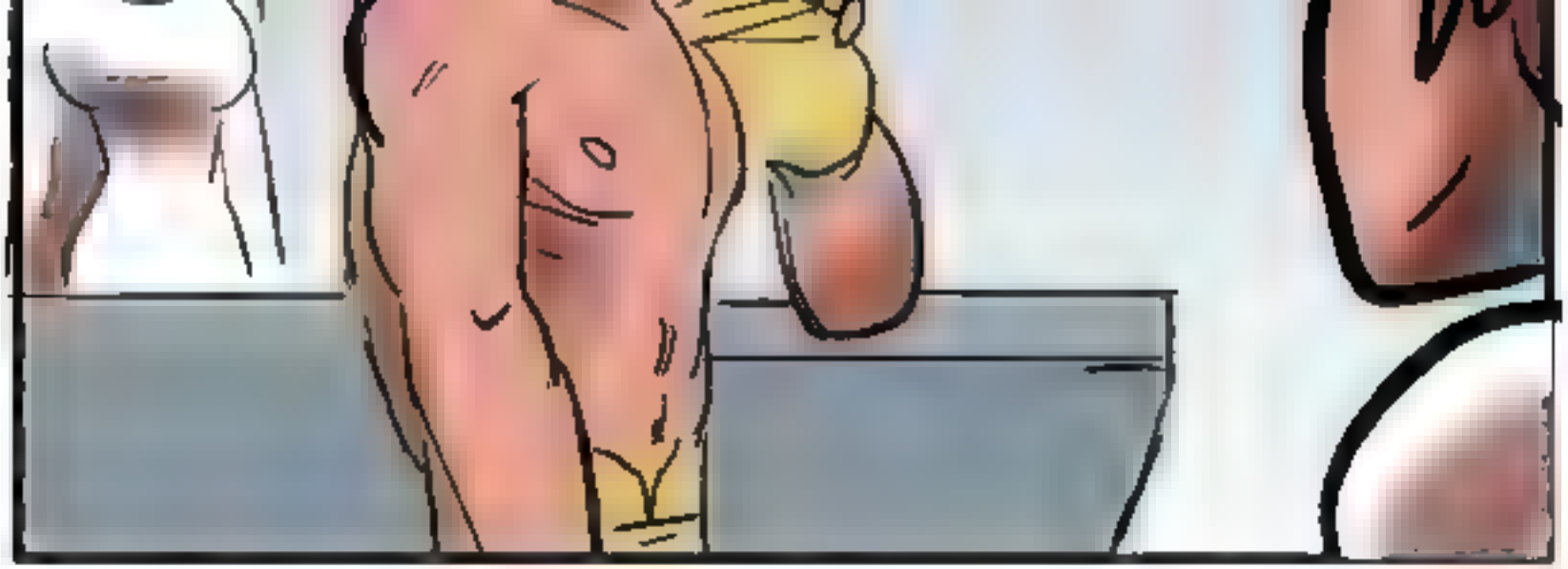
BEFORE I WOKE UP, I VISITED THE VSC INFIRMARY IN THE BLACK BOX...

AND WHILE
I WAS THERE,
IT JUST SORT
OF CLICKED.


YOU...
WE...ARE
A MANIFESTATION
OF THE BLACK
BOX.

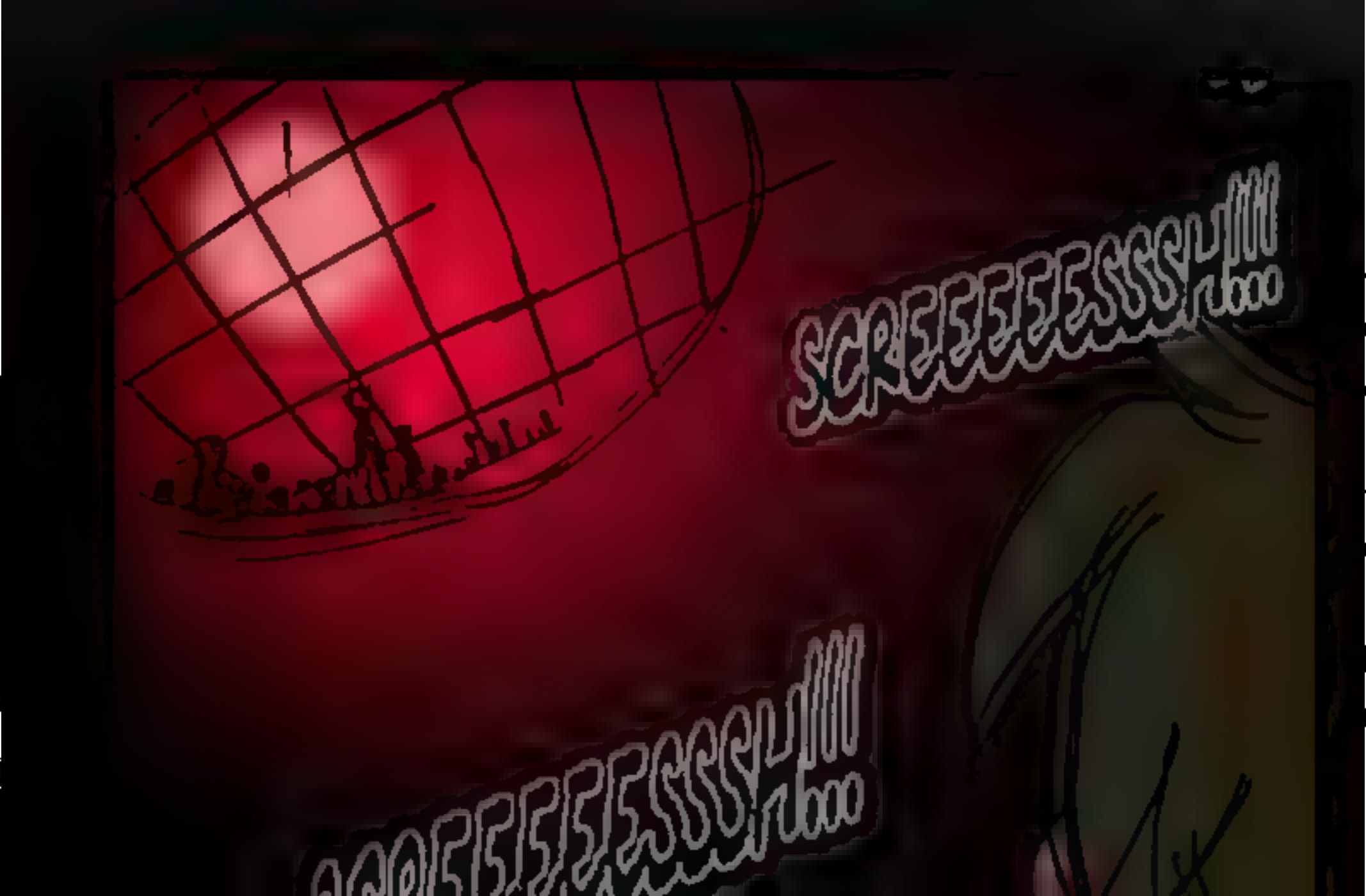

ALL MY MEMORIES... ALL THE INFORMATION I GATHERED....

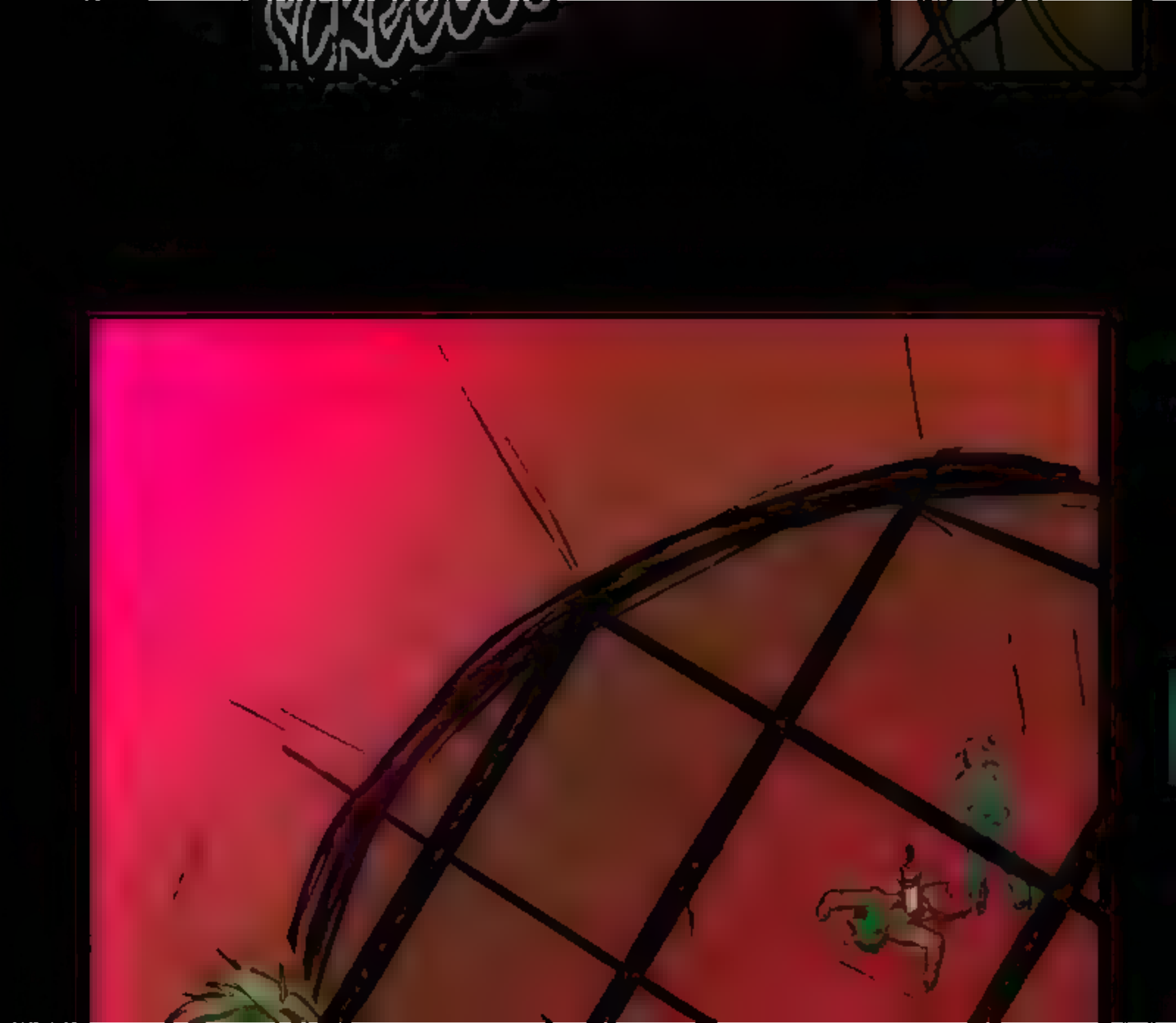

...IT'S ALL STORED HERE.

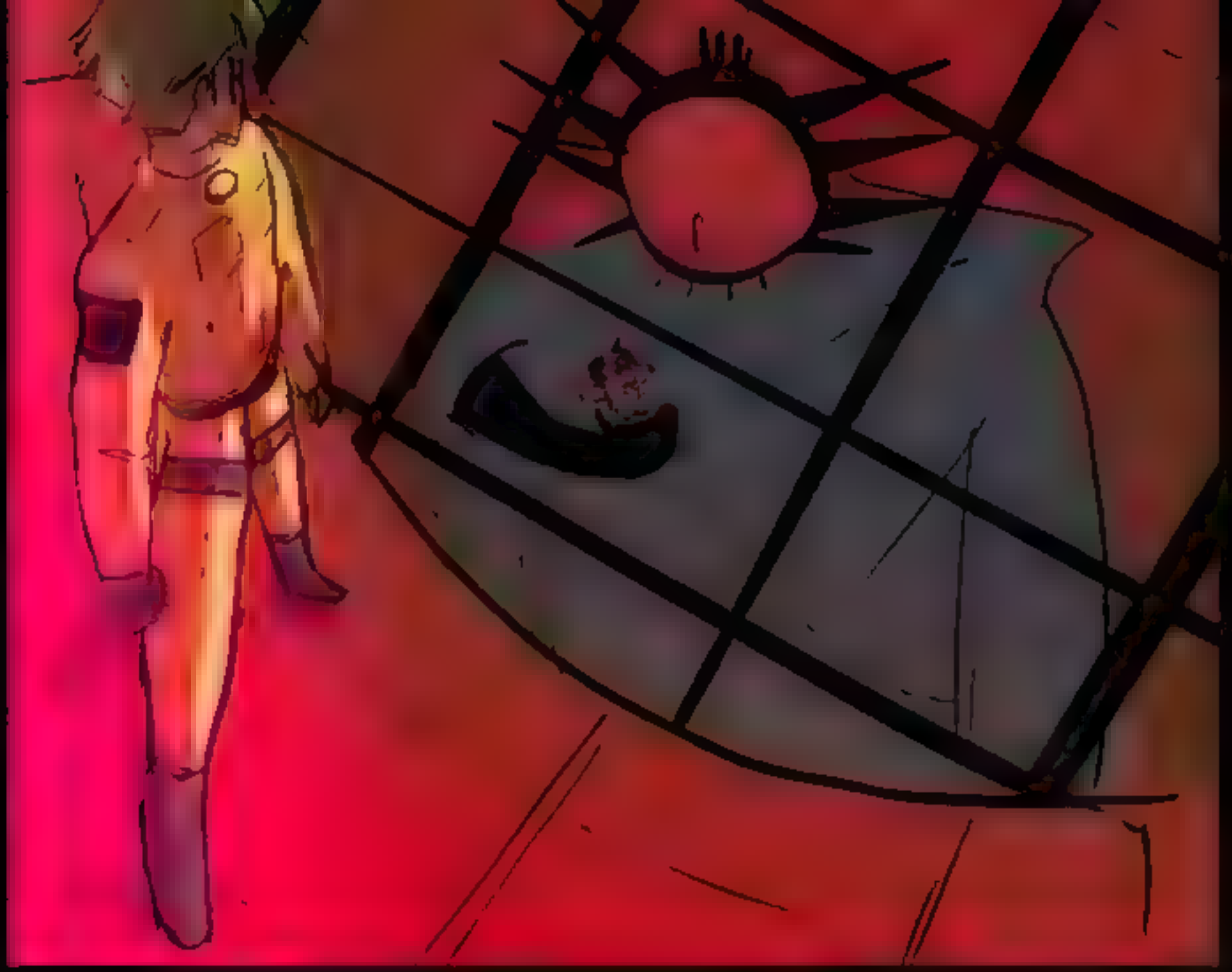


THIS IS JUST A DREAM...AN ILLUSION.

IF THESE ARE ALL MY STORED MEMORIES, WHY DO I NOT SEE THEM FROM MY OWN PERSPECTIVE?

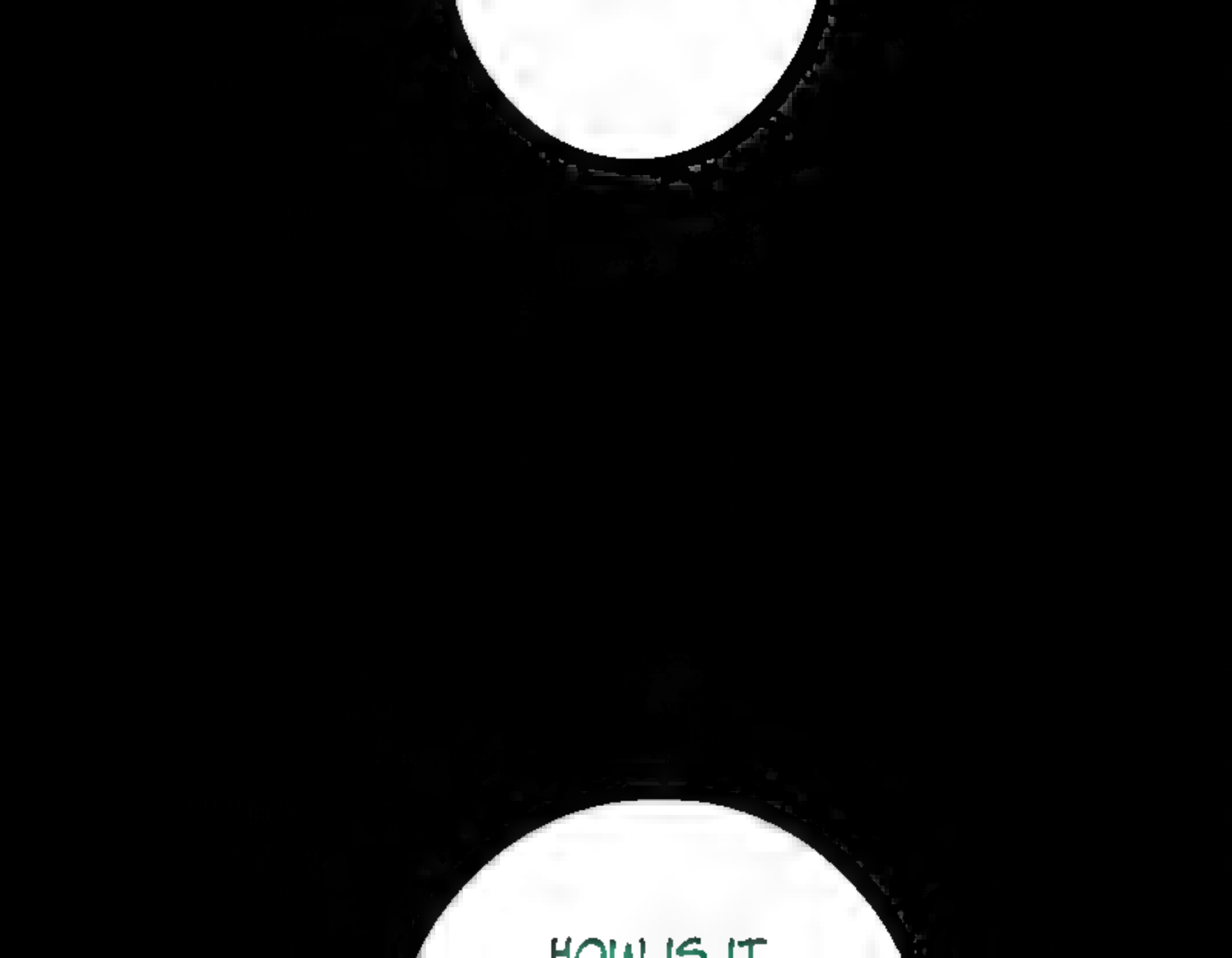

SCREEEEEESSSHHH
SCREEEEEESSSHHH





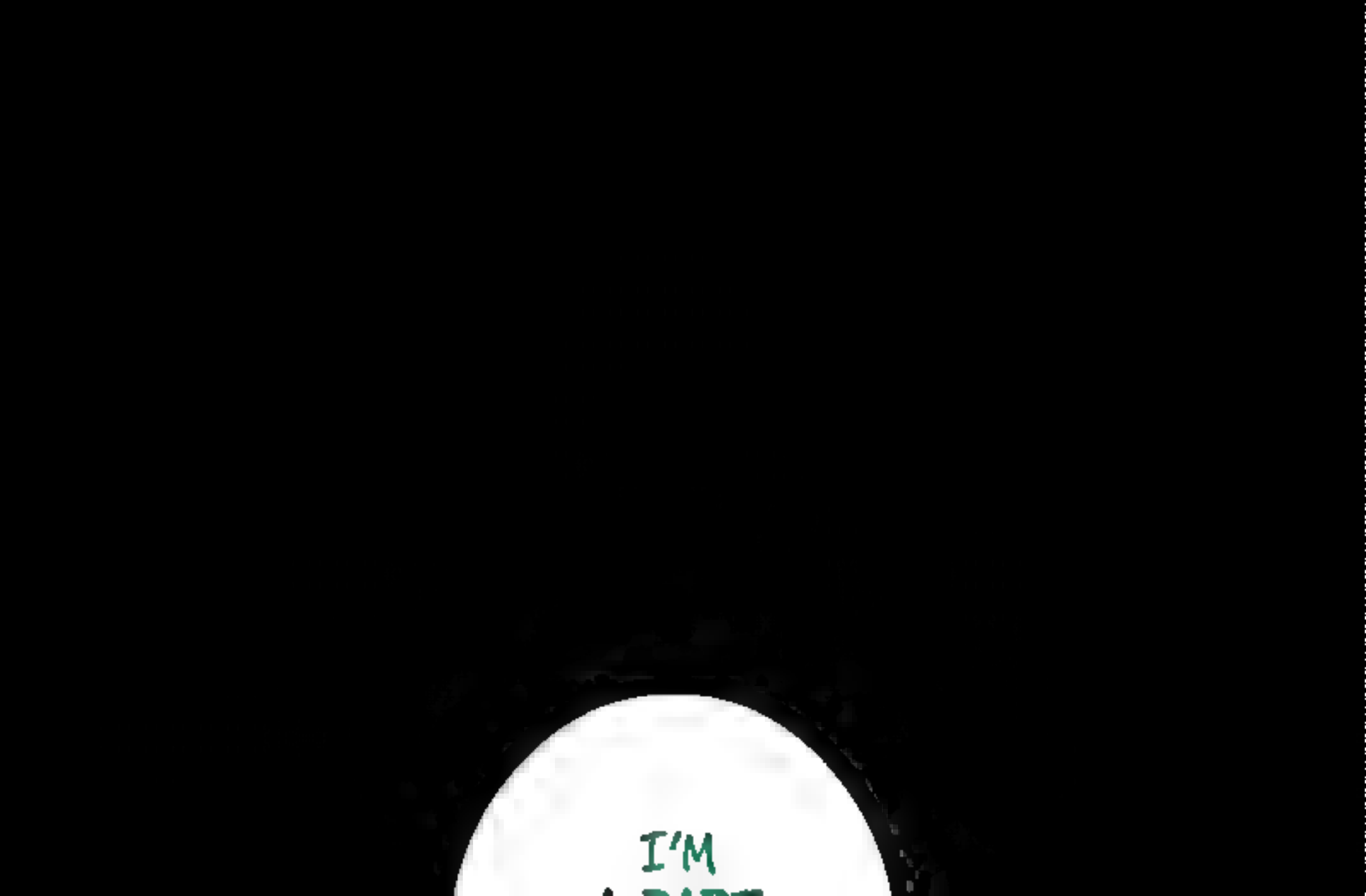
HOW IS IT I CAN STORE THEM IN THE FIRST PLACE? HOW EXACTLY CAN I USE IT TO BREAK THROUGH REALMS?

BUT MOST OF ALL...


HOW IS IT

HOW IS IT
WHEN I SPEAK TO
THOSE INSIDE, I
KNOW THEY ARE
JUST MY OWN
SELF?

IT'S KIND OF OBVIOUS IF YOU THINK ABOUT IT. I'M THE ROOM OF SWORDS' BLACK BOX.


I'M

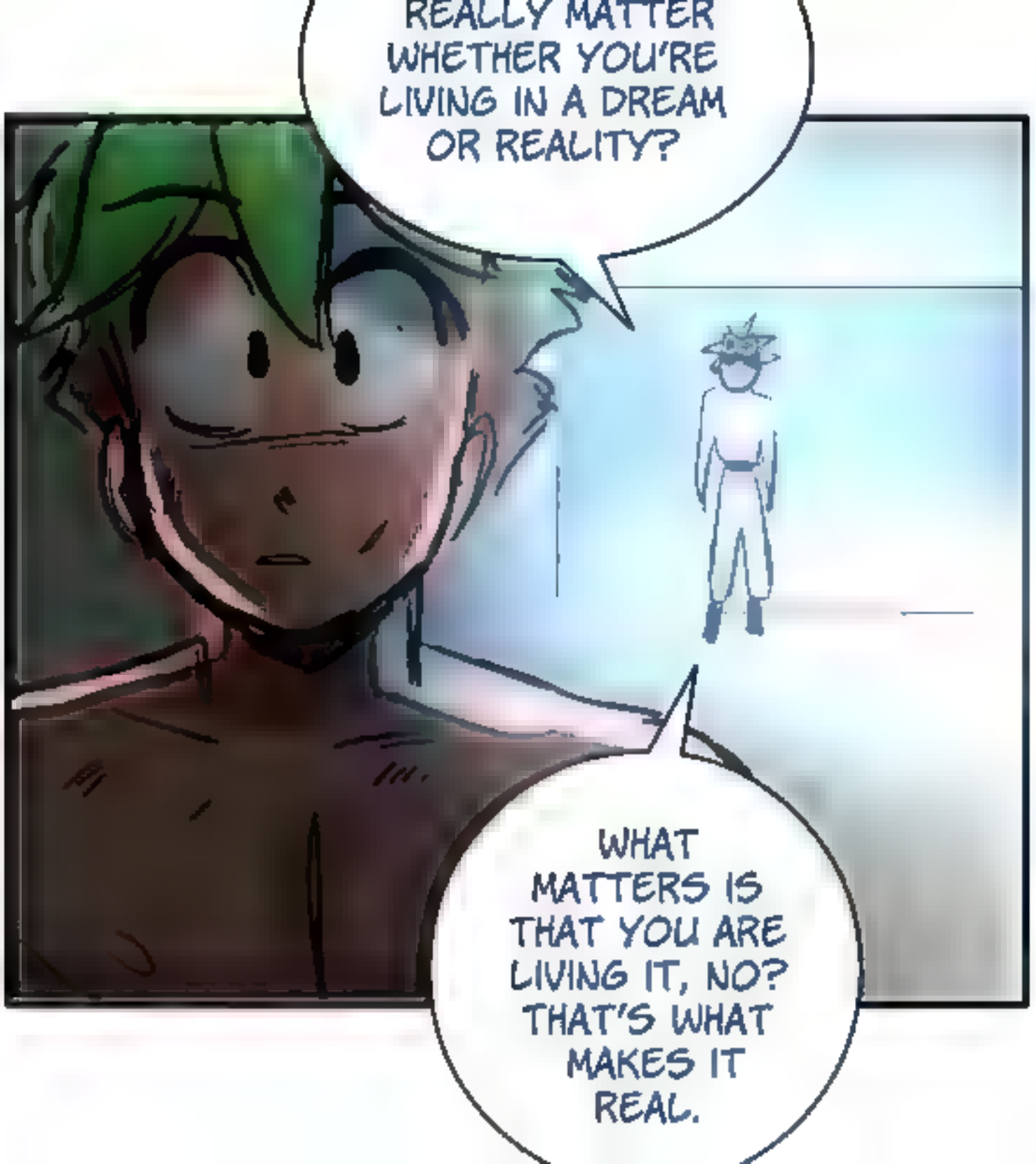
A PART OF IT'S HARDWARE.

I WAS DEVASTATED.

BUT THEN
I WAS REMINDED
THAT THE REAL WORLD,
DREAMS, AND EVEN HERE,
AREN'T SO DIFFERENT
AFTER ALL. ...THE BLACK
BOX, THE REALMS, LIFE
BEFORE THE ROOM OF
SWORDS, ITS ALL TWO

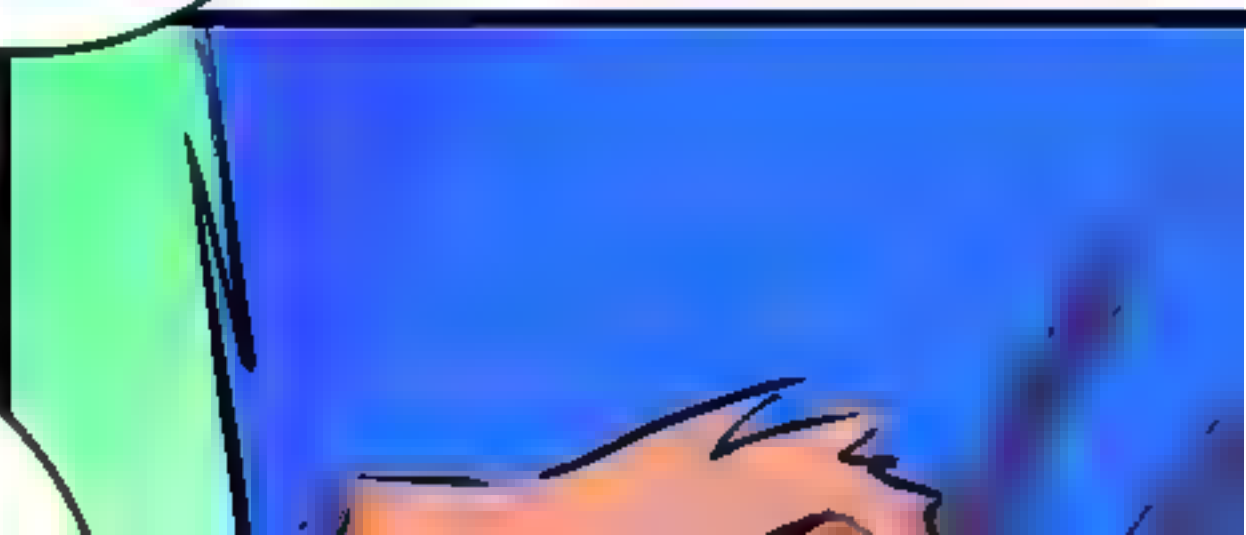
SIDES OF THE
SAME COIN...
MAYBE

DOES IT


REALLY MATTER WHETHER YOU'RE LIVING IN A DREAM OR REALITY?
WHAT MATTERS IS THAT YOU ARE LIVING IT, NO? THAT'S WHAT MAKES IT REAL.

I AM
REAL.

AND THAT GOES FOR EVERYONE HERE.



INCLUDING
YOU YUMEJI.

BUT KNOWING ALL THIS SHOULDN'T CHANGE HOW WE TREAT EACH OTHER.

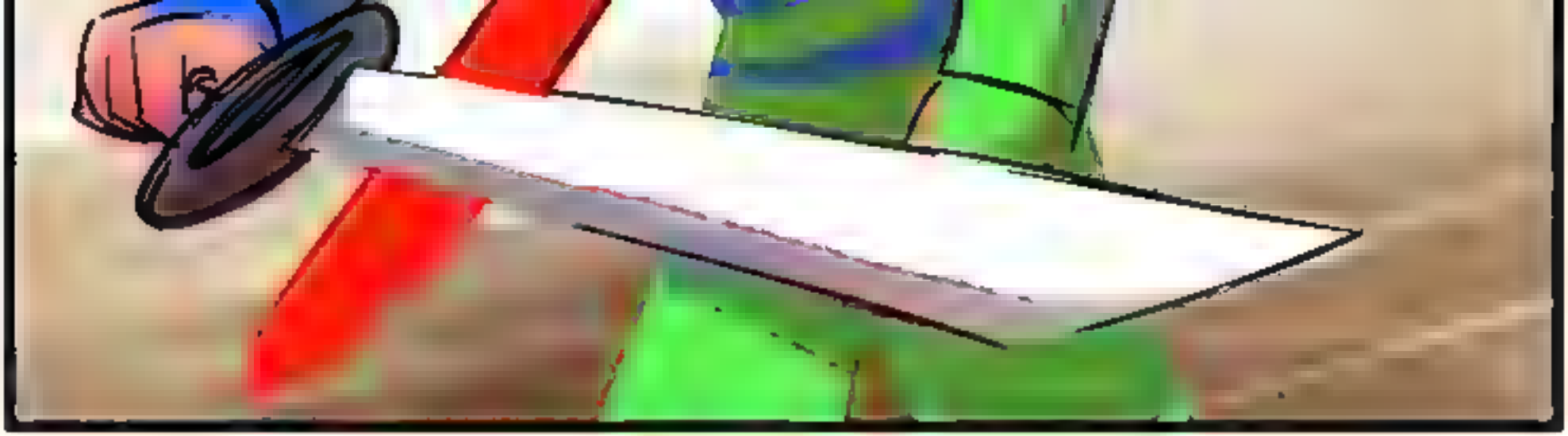
THE LOCK HAS ALREADY STARTED TO BREAK.

THAT'S...
IMPOSSIBLE.

stab

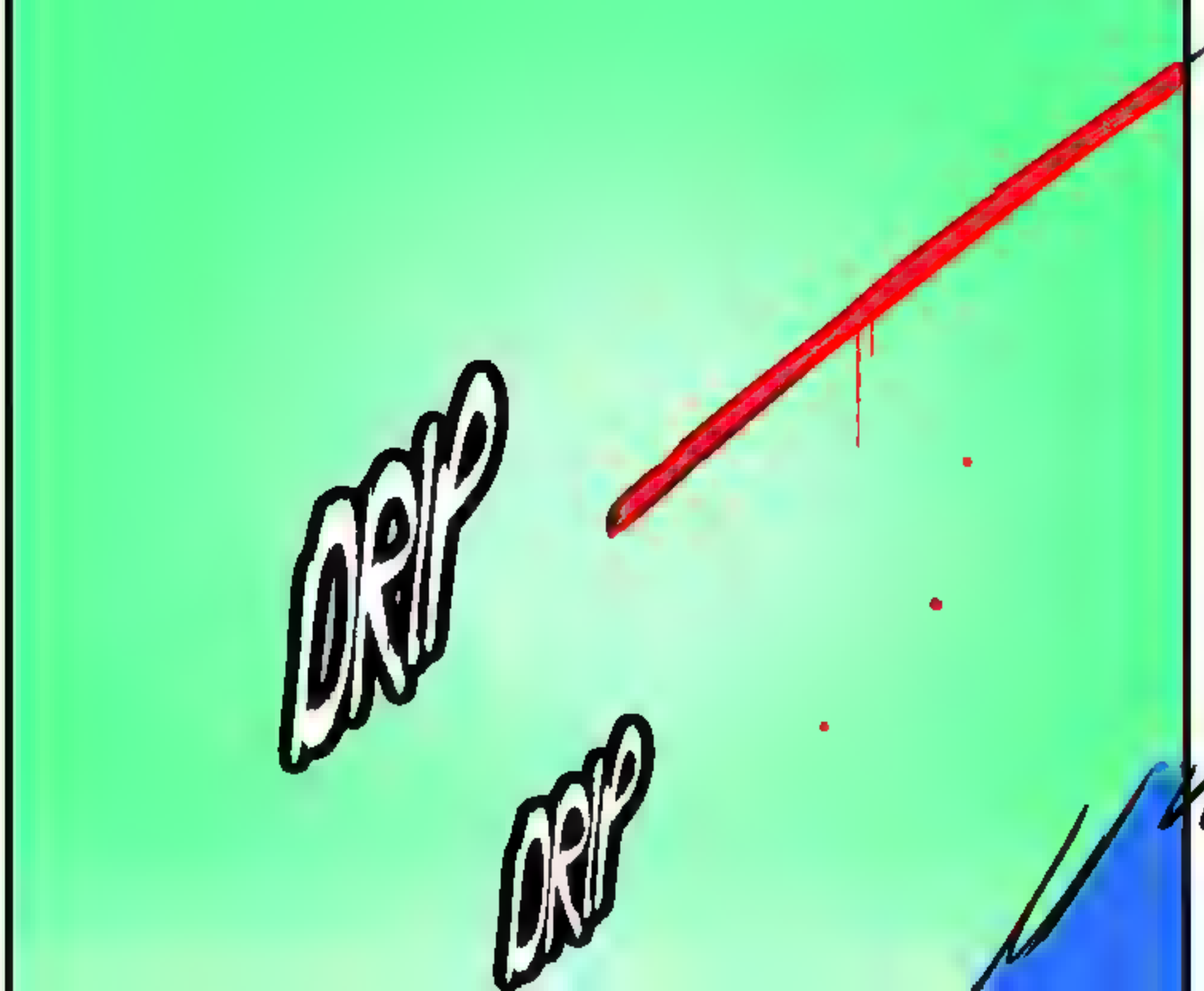
WHAT..?

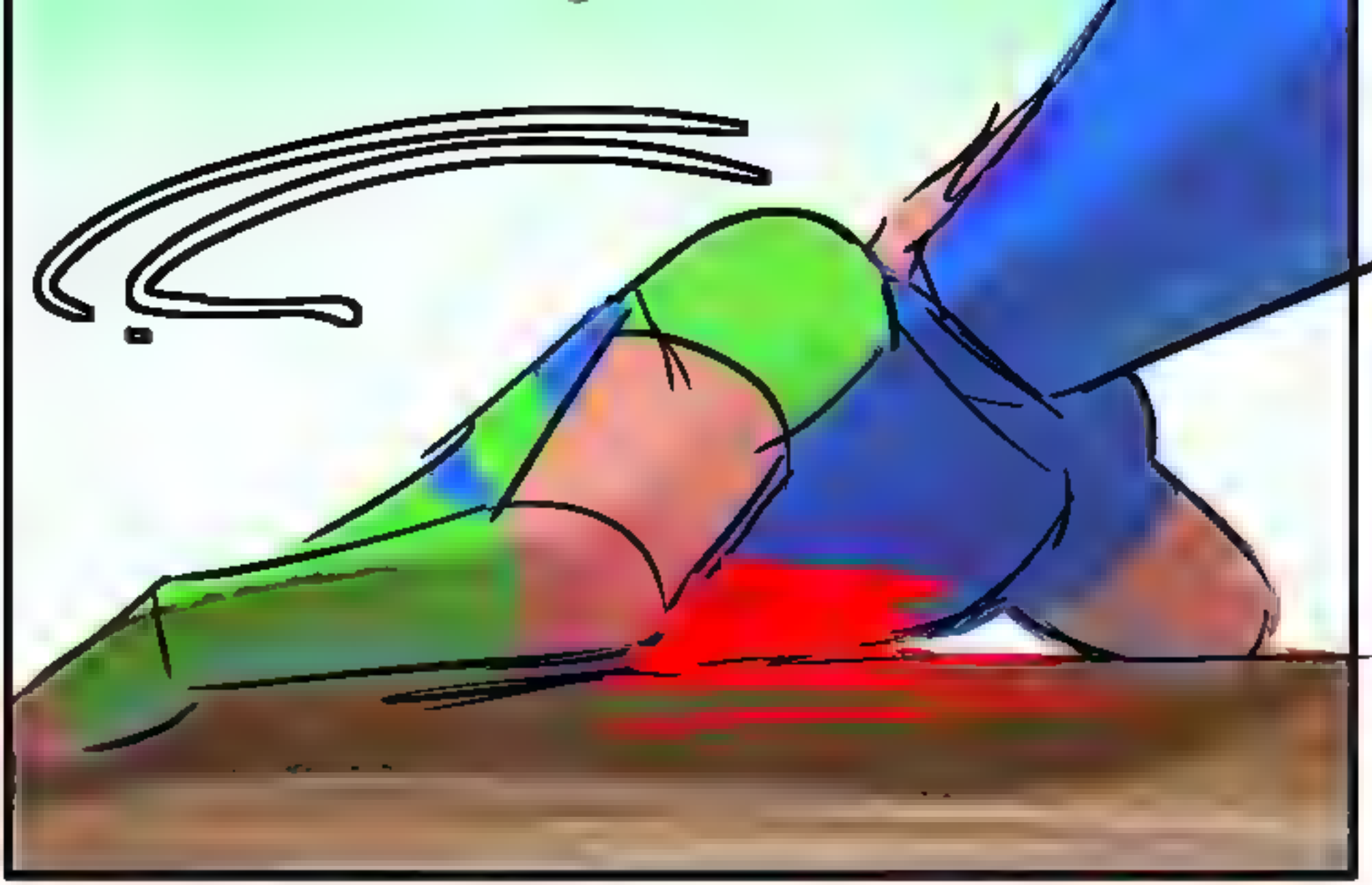
HOW?!



SWOOSH

THUD!


DRIP
DRIP



HOW DID CIB SNEAK UP ON ME LIKE THAT? I THOUGHT I PERMANENTLY HIGHLIGHTED HER!

CIB IS OVER HERE.

TOUCH
YUP...

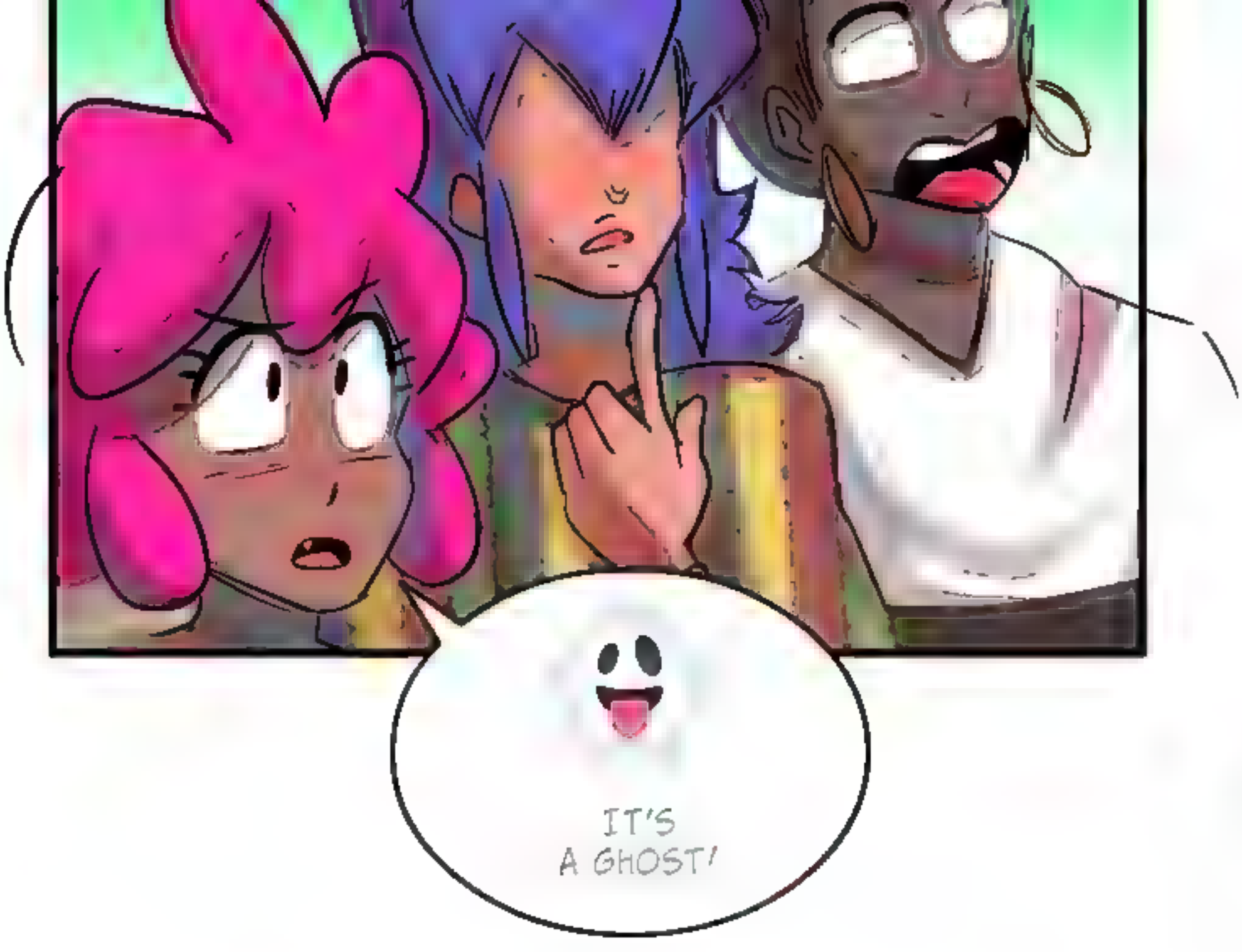
WHERE DID THAT INVISIBLE SWORD COME FROM?
I THOUGHT YUMEJI HAD THEM ALL!

WHO CARES WHERE IT COMES FROM?

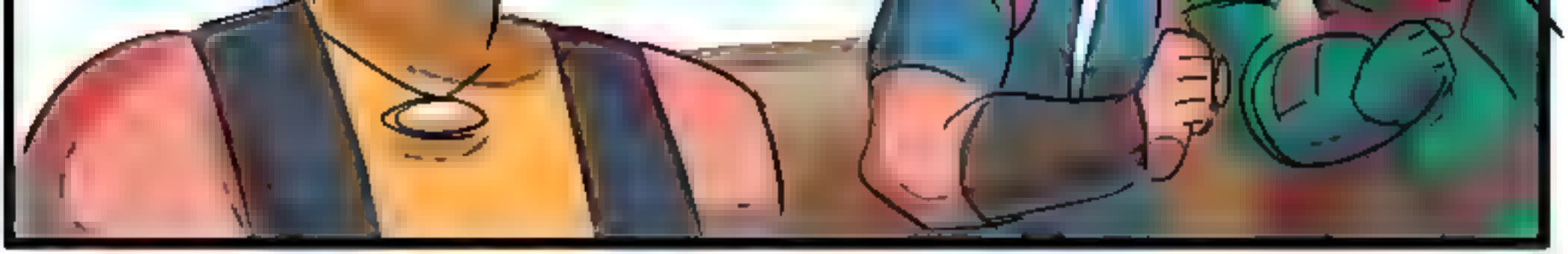
HOW DID IT STAB HIM IN THE BACK WITHOUT SOMEONE WIELDING IT? DOES IT HAVE A MIND OF ITS OWN?

THERE MUST BE SOMEONE THERE, BUT IF NOT CIB, THEN WHO?

WHAT...


IT'S
A GHOST!

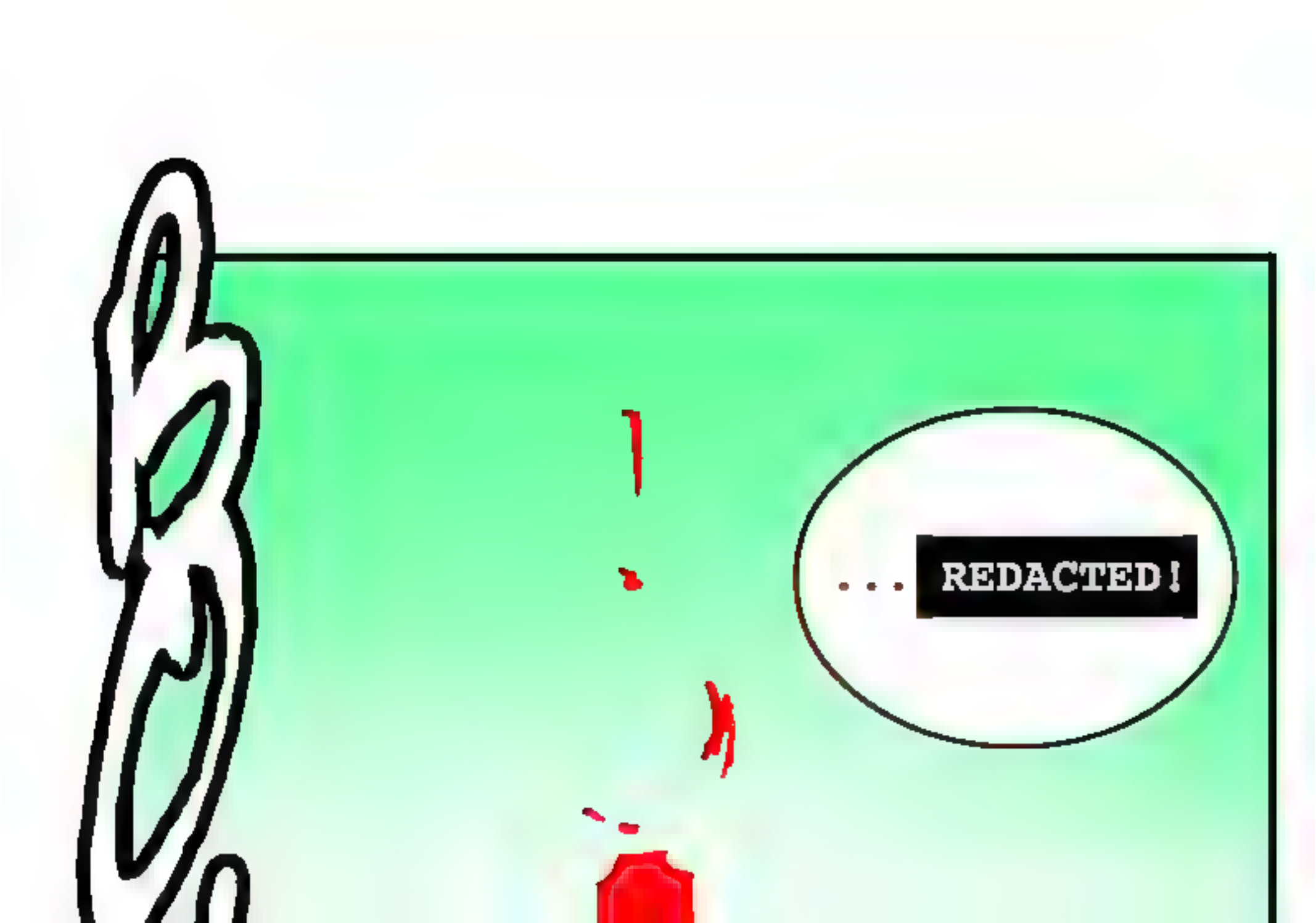
YES,
I THINK WE'RE
READY.



OH NO. HE BETTER NOT BE TALKING TO THE SHADOWS AGAIN.

GYRUS? WHO ARE YE TALKING TO?
WE DON'T SEE OR HEAR ANYONE. YOU WANNA SHARE?

IT'S YOU!


. . . REDACTED !

0

COLOR ASSISTANTS:

@[redacted] @[redacted] @[redacted]

WRITING ASSISTANT:

GHOSTING